







## The Jewish World

EDITED BY ELI H. KIDOURIE  
Led by Professor Kidourie 17 scholars show how the Jews emerged as a theocratic state, survived the destruction of Jerusalem, led a harshly regulated existence under medieval Christianity and Islam, and met both the intellectual impact of the Enlightenment and the shattering experience of the 20th century. Parallel with this 'outer' history runs an 'inner' history that alone makes it intelligible, exemplified by chapters on the Bible, the Talmud, Jewish philosophy, mysticism and imaginative literature.  
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HIDDEN KINGDOM OF THE HIMALAYAS

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ROMMEL VARMA  
TEXT BY GABRIELLE YABLONSKY  
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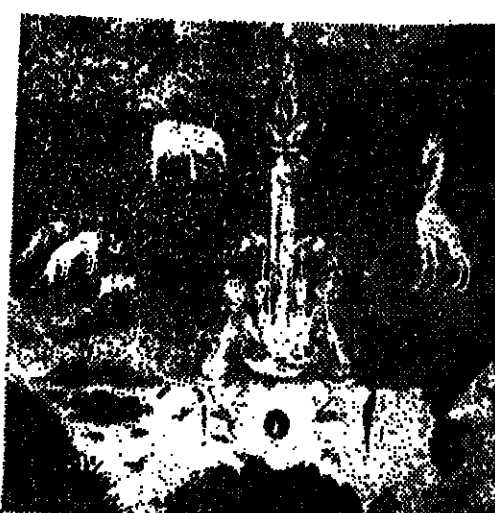
## Splendor Solis

A German Alchemical Manuscript of the Sixteenth Century

EDITED BY

STANISLAS KLOSSOWSKI DE ROLA

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SHIRLEY KING

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KENNETH FRAMPTON

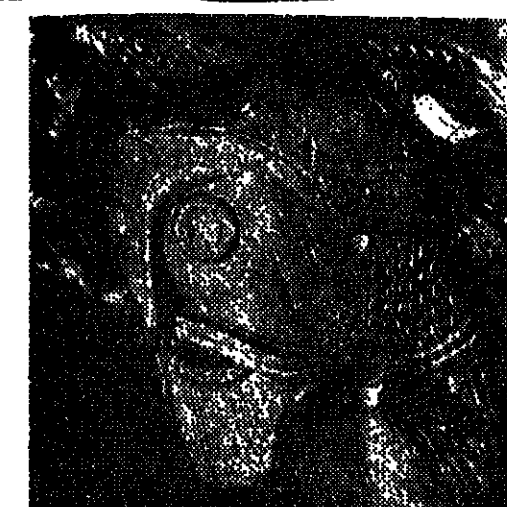
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## How Does It Feel?

Exploring the World of the Senses

EDITED BY MICK CSAKY

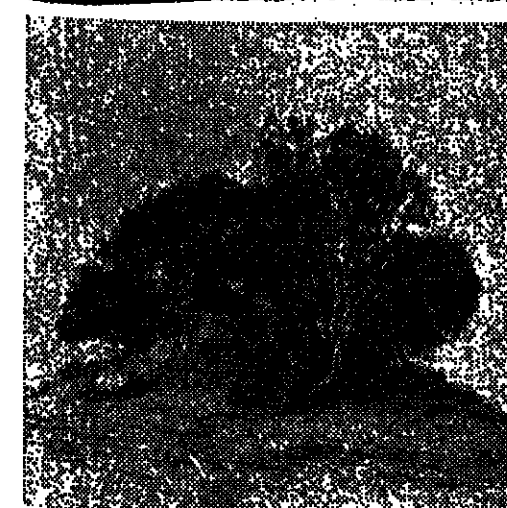
Lyall Watson, Edmund Leach, Richard Gregory and Edmund Carpenter are among 23 contributors who investigate and celebrate the potential of heightened awareness that all of us may gain by being more closely in touch with our senses, emotions and feelings. Physiologists explain how we perceive the world around us, psychologists how and why we all 'colour' our perceptions and experiences. First-hand accounts tell how techniques and activities from yoga to rock music to bioenergetics can help us respond to R. D. Laing's prophetic message: 'We're a long time dead. Life is for living.'  
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EDITED BY DAVID WILSON

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TEXT BY COLLEEN MCCULLOUGH

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MARGARET DRABBLE

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JORGE LEWINSKI  
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The Tantric Symbol of Cosmic Unity

MADHU KHANNA

FOREWORD BY AJIT MOOKERJEE

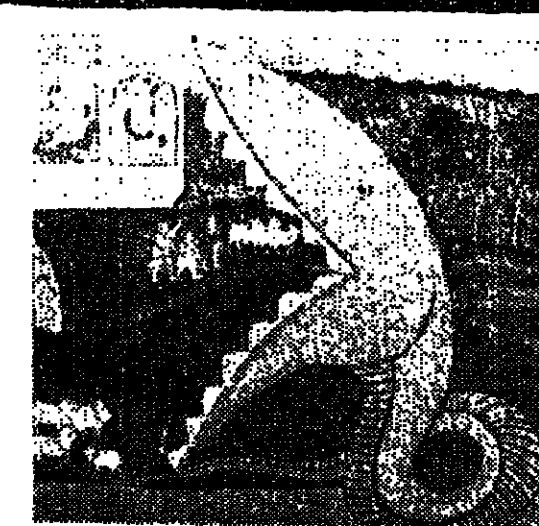
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V. C. BUCKLEY

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POLLY DEVLIN

PREFACE BY ALEXANDER LIBERMAN

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# Researching at the Ritz

By Anita Brookner

MINA CURTIS:

Other People's Letters  
243pp. Macmillan. £5.95.

Mina Curtis, when contemplating her proposed edition of Proust's letters, had the brilliant idea of actually telephoning his correspondents to see if they were still alive. Most of them, appropriately, seem to have lived into extreme old age, much changed from their former state, and Mrs Curtis's work brought her face to face with the owners of names much cherished by Proust's biographers but not known to have much posterity outside the chronicle of his life. Accordingly, she set sail for Paris in the winter of 1947; in 1949 the *Letters of Marcel Proust* were published in New York, and her brief but intense labour is chronicled, somewhat elliptically, in the present book.

Mrs Curtis's preparations for research to be undertaken in Paris will, I am sure, commend themselves to many readers of this journal. She was equipped with an all-purpose wardrobe from Mainbocher, she embarked on the Queen Elizabeth with twelve cabin trunks, one of which contains a case of whiskey. She stops briefly in London (the Berkeley) in order to see Harold Clive and Clive and David exclaim at the ugliness of the bomb craters, and then removes to Paris (suite at the Ritz) which she finds happily intact but rather short of light and heat. Her task, which she seems to have pursued with undiminished enthusiasm, is to reassemble a number of sharp, elderly persons living in reduced circumstances, legendary women such as Princess Marthe Bibesco, the Duchesse de Clomont-Tonnere, even, incredibly, the ninety-year-old Comtesse Gräfin, who served in thirty states in Africa, hotels, and dandies and icy apartments. Her attendance on these women involved an assiduous reminiscent of *The Aspern Papers*. It is possible that she was sometimes less than welcome, particularly as very little of the whiskey appears to have changed hands.

Mrs Curtis, who was herself beautiful (she tells us so), may indeed have inspired certain non-active feelings which were speedily reciprocated. Her mooding with Princess Bibesco is a case in point. She arrived, expected but unnamed, wearing her mother's sables, at the door of the Princess's chambre de bonne. Princess Bibesco expressed surprise. Mrs Curtis offered to go away and come back in ten minutes. Princess Bibesco, author of the slender *Au Bal avec Marcel Proust* and a jealous of her own standing as a protegee, showed her some letters, but refused to let her copy them. On the other hand, if Mrs Curtis could arrange for publication in the United States... Any ambivalence of the contrast between the pressure of the contrast between the pressure of French and the innocent ease of Americans, so bitterly resented in those years. Friendly overtures were abandoned, and "any relationship existing between us was to her advantage rather than mine."

Relations with Proust's niece, Suzy Mante-Proust, could also have been better. "Suzy Mante came twice for tea and once for dinner, bringing me more wheedlingly such and so to translate her uncle's letters than I find Proust's relationship with his mother one of the most painful aspects of his life. I was in no way tempted." The Mainbocher wardrobe seems to have conferred on her a certain capriciousness which was not shared by the most scrupulous scholar. Nevertheless one is a little disconcerted to learn that she joyfully accepted an invitation from the Jewish Museum to spend a weekend at Les Andelys, even though it made her feel guilty about concealing an appointment with the actress Louise de Mornand. But I excuse myself by doubting whether she could believe anything she said.

With Mrs. Maurice Dupuy, Bernard Groussin, Daniel Halévy, Prince Antoine Bibesco—the was more successful, Daniel Halévy, the nephew of Mme Sibilla, possessed not only some of the Proust letters

but Bibes's as well, and with material gathered in his library Mrs Curtis was able to prepare her next book, *Bibes and his World*. Prince Antoine Bibesco, legendary friend of Proust, was at first resistant to Mrs Curtis's telephone calls but changed his tack as soon as they met. Proust describes him with radiant hero-worship. "Tous ceux qui disent 'prince' à ce jeune diplomate d'un si grand avenir se font à eux-mêmes l'effet de personnes de Racine, tant avec son aspect mythologique il fait penser à Achille ou Thésée." Prince Antoine's address to Mrs Curtis were couched rather more in the vernacular. He leapt into her bed, and Mrs Curtis confesses that it was "relaxing" to talk about Proust in a horizontal position, but she does not tell us whether Prince Antoine offered her a look in every evening, and Mrs Curtis was obliged to refuse him until the letters had been copied. A proposal of marriage was followed by an offer to lecture in America, if only Mrs Curtis would arrange the matter. The impasse was resolved in the usual way. The letters were sold, through an intermediary who also happened to be a friend of Mrs Curtis. They are in the library of the University of Illinois at Urbana.

A similar fate awaited letters in the collection of Mme Sibilla, the Danish-born niece by marriage of Mme Straus, in whose nervous and unreliable possession were the rest of the Bibes and Proust holdings. Mme Sibilla had moved to the Avenue d'Orléans, where she had a two-roomed apartment in the first edition, some with authors' letters inserted. Most of the time Mme Sibilla was too frightened to get out of bed and Mrs Curtis was obliged to be in attendance for three weeks. Again she obtained exclusive rights to study

The dinner consisted of pearl grey caviare, a rack of baby lamb with fresh peas, asparagus with mousseline sauce, wonderful cluffs, and chocolate cream. The wines were Bollinger 1929, Richebourg 1921, and Musigny 1921. The cigars were Romeo and Juliet which I haven't seen since father died... But you can't imagine what it was like to have this exhausting eight-course dinner served by the bourgeoisie where the champagne only arrives with the glass and I never got enough.

There was, however, one tiny cloud on the horizon. One of the ladies to whom Mrs Curtis was introduced—by poor Mme Schöckel, still bemoaning the wounds on her breast caused by her early suicide attempt—was Céleste Albarot, Proust's former housekeeper was then running a small

Mme Sibilla's treasure by offering to negotiate the purchase by Yale. This fell through but a cast of the Proust letters was arranged with an unnamed American living in Paris. "For the immensely valuable Bibes-Halévy part of the collection I paid an option of several thousand dollars." But during Mrs Curtis's absence in the United States Mme Sibilla will the bulk of her material to the Bibliothèque Nationale. The two ladies never met again.

This airy account provides rather a hard riddle for the reader and my growing difficulties with the text received clarification when I remembered George Gissing's assessment of poor Marian Yule: "Ideal personages do not descend to girls who have to labour at the British Museum." In contrast Mrs Curtis seems to have pursued the primrose path of indeed the Guermentes Way of scholarship. The dinner at Mme Sibilla's apartment is a case in point.

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# Submitting to discipline

By J. M. Cocking

PHILIP KOLB (Editor):

Correspondence de Marcel Proust  
Volume 4, 1964  
504pp. Paris: Plon.

1904, as Philip Kolb remarks, can be called Proust's "Russian year". The hard grief of translating and editing *The Bible of Amiens* behind him and he knows his way round Ruskin's work, so that *Sesame and Lilies* goes more smoothly and readily offers to provide the critical apparatus for somebody else's translation of *The Bible of Amiens*. He turns down, however, a Venetian publisher's suggestion that he should himself translate *St Mark's Rest*.

His feeling for Ruskin was always ambiguous. Already in an early essay he had dissociated himself from what he called Ruskin's "idealism" or "worshipping ideal beauty in particular, works of art instead of in itself and in himself; yet in the Bible of Amiens he implies that Ruskin had helped him by making him see how the "ideal" could be found and described in the sensible world, by demonstrating as it were an "applied" idealism. These 1904 letters show him still struggling with Ruskin's English, with much help from Marie Nordlinger, and occasionally, with his more obscure references to Ruskin possibly mean when he says that the name "Eliotson", meaning "iron-ach", is "a significant of Thorington-remembrance". Proust writes with a certain pusillanimity to Emily Florio, as well as to Marie Nordlinger. He confesses to Marie that "as a villager I commence a 'maneuver'". Yet a week or two later he says he is "tout flamme" and there is no reason to doubt the sincerity of December 1904, conveying the depth of his feeling for Ruskin's work. His reason for not translating *St Mark's Rest* is mainly that he wants to get on with his own creative writing.

Unlike Valéry, Proust has no sustained profit of literary activity and influence. When the review of *Les Arts de la Vie* began a campaign against "Alibi", Proust, the nephew of Mme Sibilla, possessed not only some of the Proust letters

loaded questions about state authoritarianism and the tyrannical secularism of Rome? Proust pointed out that the document was not so much a questionnaire as a directive, based on false assumptions about the creativity of former artists and his spontaneous search for examples of the kind of discipline he needed. Roma, he says, is not at all a place to discover what art is all about; and instead of abolishing the Beaux-Arts, why not appoint Mouton, Fench-Latour, Dogas and Rodin to teach there? "No instruction can impose an enthusiasm," he writes, "qui ne soit le résultat d'un effort personnel, d'un effort plus puissant que le sien. Et c'est là une servitude qui n'est pas libérée." On the whole, however, the ever, discretion or defeatism and it over valour and the letter was not sent to the campaign organizer; Proust summed it up later in a private letter to the editor.

Proust's friendships with aristocrats of his own age continue, though in 1904 Fénelon and the Bibesco brothers are away from Paris a good deal—Fénelon almost entirely. Proust is going out less and less and there is less frivolity in his letters; more than once he refers to his recently dead father's disappointment in him and he is perhaps settling down more willingly and consistently to hard work. Moreover some of his friends are marrying and changing their life-style. Ought Proust to do likewise? He has, he says, no taste for it. Professor Kolb reads in the exchanges with Marie Nordlinger a disilluminated hope on her part that Proust might ask her to marry him. Many of the letters have intriguing some hitherto unpublished ones are to Alibuféra and his mistress Louise de Mornand at the time of the former's engagement and marriage, with Proust soothing Louise, reassuring Alibuféra and offering himself as a lightning conductor in the emotional storm.

Professor Kolb continues to set the Bibesco record straight. He reported in Volume Two the correspondence of Bibesco's irresponsible meddling with the letters he published—cutting, transposing, and even substituting false names and words. In one letter here

maker and a ridiculous caricature of himself; they must come to understand about certain of the above. Bibesco omitted this letter from his own book. In another letter he omitted parts of sentences implying criticism of himself. In yet another, clearly addressed to Don Anselmo, he printed, "Cher lord Maurice" and, in the next, omitted Mrs Sydney Webb for Clayton—it is hard to see why. Professor Kolb's own editing is punctilious as ever; every word of information needed to make the letters intelligible and fit them to the biographical and historical context has been hunted down and clearly recorded. As in the previous volumes there are some of the letters now arranged in chronological sequence has helped the reader to reassess one or two of the earlier conjectures. On one occasion his dating is even gone, against the postmark, yet his argument seems unassailable.

Some of the most interesting letters are those to and from Anne de Noailles. She writes of Proust's merveilleux dialogue "l'œuvre de douceur, qui sont comme deux fleuves qui se consacrent à glisser tout près l'un de l'autre, mais qui ne se touchent pas." It is hyperbole rather than hypocrisy; his mind is obviously working on the technique of her style which he is so fascinated by. He is so far from feeling that Proust had any common sense of the kind of effective communication that the French "chémisme" of the 1950s used to teach on; the letters to Anne show him trying to show how such unity is achieved. These letters point towards the 1907 review of *Les Éléments de la technique de la littérature* and painting and the analysis of the role of metaphor in the "metaphorical" paintings of Elati.

There are some magnificent letters in the index. One, written by Proust to his wife, and which Proust got it wrong and which "Wistler" but did print, here have made common sense of

## POLITICS

# Rumblings in the political village

By Janet Morgan

PHILIP NORTON:

Conservative Dissidents  
Patient within the Parliamentary  
Conservative Party 1970-1974  
310pp. Temple Smith. £10.

MICHAEL HATFIELD:

The House the Left Built  
Inside Labour Policy Making 1970-1975  
272pp. Gollancz. £8.50.

These books explore the seething of two very peculiar worlds. Both investigations cover the years from 1970 to 1975 (Philip Norton's book allows himself a glance forward to Mr Heath's fall from the Conservative leadership). In all other respects the two volumes could not be more different.

The dustjackets give the first clue. *Conservative Dissidents* is blue, with white and yellow lettering, and at the back are listed Philip Norton's degrees, academic posts and earlier writings. These include *Dissension in the House of Commons 1945-74*, a reference book that we are reminded, was described in the TLS as "a dependable and unbiased compendium". "A useful and unpretentious contribution". Dr Norton's second book follows this precedent; it has still less to be pretentious about.

*The House the Left Built*, in white, red and black, has on the front a cartoon of the National Executive Committee's foot-troops and mounted leadership, in oddly assorted headgear. Michael Hatfield, a member of *The Times's* political staff, is pictured in dark glasses, with his hand to his forehead in a gesture of despair. He will undoubtedly keep it, even after publishing "this unique study", so

disputations and factional are his confidants, so anxious for allies and exposure, in a word, so lucky.

Let us turn to the contents. In the first part of his book, Dr Norton catalogues all forms of dissent expressed by Conservative backbenchers in the four sessions of the 1970-74 Parliament. The spectrum ranges from the utterance of unimpeachable protest in closed party meetings to ostentatious voting against the party Whips' directions. It takes in the signing of motions to be debated on an Early Day, public speeches revealing disagreement with the party line, criticisms made in Parliament, and, disapproving deputations to the Prime Minister and/or members of the Cabinet, the promotion of contrary amendments in government legislation and, not at all as cowardly as the outsider might think, abstention and meaning silence.

The author is not short of promising material. During this period a number of large issues caused disaffected Conservative backbenchers to rebel. They were provoked by government proposals to sell arms to South Africa, the continuation of the annual Rhodesia Sanctions Order, policy towards Northern Ireland, entry to the EEC (the vote on the principle of membership, in October, 1971, and the Bill itself, October, 1971-July, 1972), the Local Government Bill, the Industry Bill, the Finance Bill, economic and counter-inflationary policy, the decision to admit Ugandan Asian refugees, immigration rules, introducing the concept of "patriality", the Maplin Development Bill and the Government's response to the Arab/Israeli war that broke out in October, 1973.

Thus, just as excited readers are about to hurl themselves into this history of controversy and intrigue, they are halted by a stilet Statistical Note on page 19. The Yule's Q method has been "practically employed"; thus, "for testing the association between variables X and Y, Yule's Q =

where a = XY, b = NY, c = XY and d = XY. The value of Q can range from -1.0 to +1.0."

Part 2—the Analysis—is slightly less heavy going. A dozen strategically placed chapters on the Whips' duties are illuminated by quotations from interviews with the officers themselves and by extracts from the memorandum "Whips' Notes" circulated at the beginning of the 1970 Parliament. There is a useful chapter on constituency pressures—and then we are back to statistics. The incidence of dissent is discussed, the causal factors for its increase are analysed, we are earnestly and professionally told that it is with amazement that we suddenly stumble out into the light. After 221 pages, Dr Norton explains what, he believes, has been irritating backbenchers all along—the leadership of Edward Heath—and what has sustained the rebels—a right-wing faction, whose views were most successfully articulated, though not orchestrated, by Enoch Powell. (A diagram of overlapping circles and a table based on the Yule's Q index will reassure any doubting readers.)

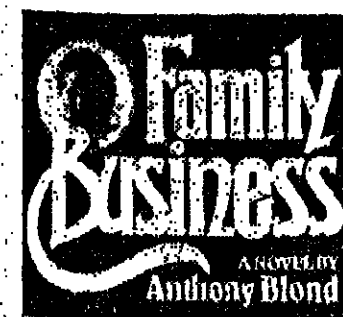
Dr Norton's book is a quantifying methodologist's dream: Michael Hatfield tells a good story. He describes the efforts of the Labour left to reshape the party programme, after the general election defeat in 1970. We see the abduction and isolation of Roy Jenkins and Anthony Crosland, the rise of Tony Benn and the neat footwork of Harold Wilson, as Mr Hatfield takes us through the complicated manoeuvrings to secure a National Enterprise Board ("with teeth"), withdrawal from the EEC (watered down to "rationalisation") and the Social Compact (inexplicably, even now, transformed in Contract). The author exposes inner workings of Transport House, its Research Department and policy-making committees, the NEC, the Shadow Cabinet, the TUC, and a variety of liaison committees, sub-committees and planning groups. He guides us among the tangled alliances and rivalries (described, twice, as "intestine warfare"). References are explained: we are given, for instance,

a brief history of the Gais-Kellies, Tribune and Clause Four, a description of NEC election procedure, voting at the Party Conference and the origins and structure of Italy's industrial reconstruction Institute (IRI) and National Hydrocarbons Corporation (ENI).

Mr Hatfield is short on statistical abstractions but his protagonists are real enough. At appropriate points in his narrative, the author gives a brief biography of every leading politician in the campaign, including the various factions' economic and political advisers. From time to time, admittedly, the journalist's hand flashes too quickly, when, for instance, Terry Pitt, head of the Transport House Home Research Staff, appears as "a former metallurgist, (who) had a sharp instinct for detecting hair-line cracks in the party", or Eric Hoffer as "a former member of the Home Research Staff, who has a sharp instinct for detecting hair-line cracks in the party", or Eric Hoffer as "a former member of the Home Research Staff, who has a sharp instinct for detecting hair-line cracks in the party".

Stylistically, this racy study of Labour wrangles is a world removed from Dr Norton's earnest picture of Conservative dissent. Hatfield loves a metaphor: his title sets him off on talk of denouement, speculative building and right-wing preservation orders. Dr Norton spins such frivolity; his prose is spare. Hatfield tells little jokes and anecdotes, like the fact that the Department of Technology was built on the site of Tony Benn's childhood home on Millbank, and that Eric Varley, summoned by Harold Wilson and invited to take Benn's place as Secretary of State for Industry was, when interviewed, at Covent Garden hearing Verdi's *La Forza del Destino*. Dr Norton has a single joke, about Pelham and Cavendishes, Montagues (sic) and Capulets. It is on page 24.

Mr Hatfield's book is for readers who wish to learn what politics is like. Dr Norton's book for those who are eager to see what political science is like. Each volume is a model of its kind and each, in its own fashion, demonstrates the curious nature of the political village it describes: enclosed, convention-bound and frustrated.



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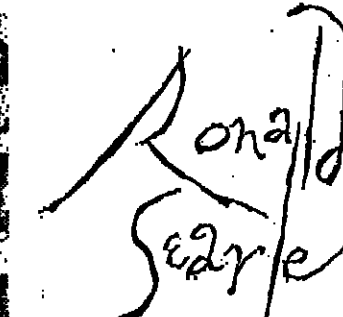
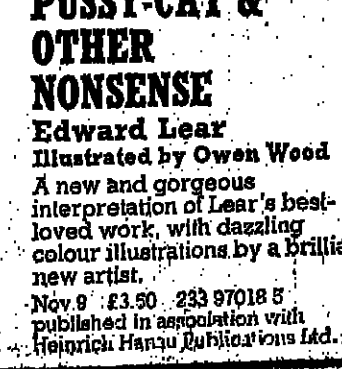
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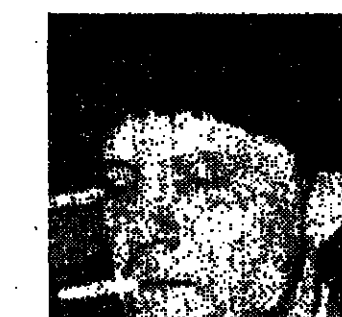
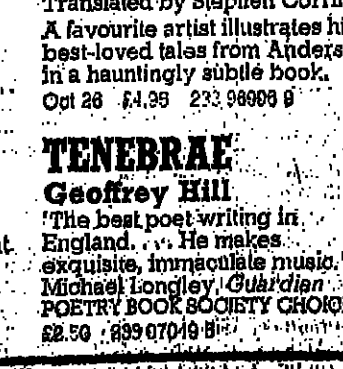
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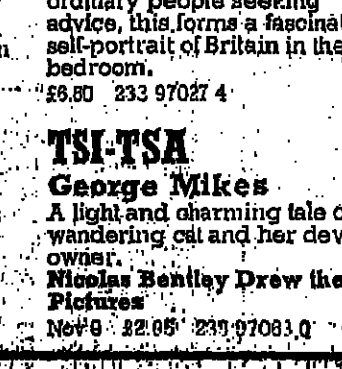
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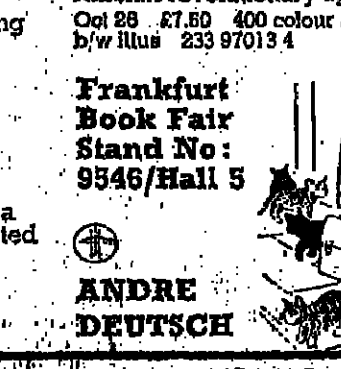
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# Cleaning out the Yard

By Peter Laurie

SIR ROBERT MARK:  
In the Office of Constable  
An Autobiography  
320pp Collins £6.95.

Given the difficulties of autobiography, Sir Robert Mark's book pretty well does him justice. We see him arriving from obscurity, convinced that an honest police force is desirable and possible. He is not the first stranger to be commissioned by a doom-ridden Home Office to clean out the mire at Scotland Yard. Indeed it seems, in hindsight, that these particular stables fill with ordure nearly as fast as the most determined can borrow it out. And barely has he completed this task than he is chased out by Roy Jenkins and comes to rest in the outer suburbs, a well paid security consultant to foreign governments.

There is now an established format for policemen's memoirs. One is born in poor but honest parents. One is educated—but not too well, because policemen know about intellectuals—and joins the force, where conditions of unimaginable brutality obtain. A few gruesome stories are recounted of what life is really like.

One rises in rank by virtue of qualities which one had not supposed one had; relates the inside details of three once-notorious cases which may still be dimly remembered by a few readers; proposes some valuable reforms of one's own and warns of the dire effects of other peoples'. Sir Robert treads this time-honoured path, but his book is less reading while many others are not.

As a less than perfect student at Manchester Grammar in the mid-1920s, he says to himself: "You are well built, fit, good at games and not entirely stupid. Why not take a job without popular appeal in which there

qualifications will give you a positive advantage?"

And though to his father joining the police was "only one step better than going to prison", Robert perseveres and becomes PC 202 in the Manchester force.

Seniors favoured on and bullied juniors and the force as a whole did the same to that part of the public not able effectively to look after itself. The system was harsh, unimaginative, unintelligent and ruthless.

Called on to remove a vagrant who had died some weeks before in an upper room, incident 202 takes the lower end of the stretcher going down the stairs and is showered with the most indescribable filth. He rises in this "aristocratic" service and at Munich time is whisked into the local special branch whose task is to survive and report on any organization seeking political objectives by violent means. It taught him, he tells us, much about the dangers of police action in a juridical vacuum.

When Italy joined the war many harmless Italians were arrested. One such was a man who had been thirty years a writer in Manchester, was married and had a British-born daughter. Mark and his inspector had to take up this unhappy Mr. Landucci, whose contribution to the fascist cause was two and sixpence paid annually to the Italian Consul General in southern Italy. In spite of a report emphasizing Mr. Landucci's extreme harmlessness, he was embarked in the *Armador* Star for Canada and finally torpedoed three days later.

The sense of shock, or tragedy, day. The irresponsibility, the fullness, still arouses the strongest feelings in me. I suppose more than anything else that experience taught me that there was neglect and worse in the police system. It was a lesson I never forgot.

When he blames the "police system" he is being kind, I think, for surely MFS, then in a rage

state of chaos, was the guilty party. And I have heard him speak of that organization in less than charitable terms. But this reticence contrasts oddly with a remark later on, when he compares MFS with his sister organizations such as the Gestapo or the KGB in more brisquely organized states, and says that it is "less frightening than a powder puff". Mr. Landucci would not have thought so.

Mark went into the Army, had a good war in Phantom, the high command's organization for liaison with the fighting troops, came back older and more sure of himself and in the 1950s began applying for better jobs. In 1957 he was made Chief Constable of Leicester, arriving there with a second-hand car and an overdraft of £35. (At every turn we have his accounts. These are not the least useful part of the book because until a man's pockets are transparent his motives must always be in doubt.)

In Leicester he invented the traffic warden. This, and his attack on the acquittal rate in trials by jury—which led, surprisingly soon to the adoption of the Scottish system of majority verdicts—led to fame, if not fortune. Ten years later "fat struck him smartly behind the ear with a stuffed eel-skin". His force was amalgamated with another larger one and he was saved from unemployment only by transfer to Scotland Yard. His reception there was both funny and frightful.

I felt rather like the representative of a leper colony attending the annual garden party of a colonial governor and was soon left in no doubt that I was not alone in that assessment.

At the time I too was circulating that anonymous building. I had a letter to whom it might concern in my pocket signed by the then Commissioner, Sir Joseph Simpson, which said in effect: "Mr Laurie, this is a journal. Tell him everything." Since the Metropolitan Police CID, in Mark's view, "had long been the most routinely corrupt organization in London", neither of us was made warmly wel-

come. We used to meet from time to time, orbiting the plastic corridors like lonely asteroids.

The management of the Metropolitan Police was carried out by a group of very large men with a guilty look to them. As it turned out, they had much to answer for. I knew it explicitly or not—to be guilty about.

I had never experienced institutional wrongdoing, blindness, arrogance on anything like the scale accepted as routine in the Met.

Sulks, tantrums, hysterics, ominous silences were the common coin of professional intercourse among the leaders of the police. A good description of the emotional atmosphere prevailing is to be found in *Six Curtains* for *Strangers* by Ibrahim and Courtis—matters too diffuse to summarize, but on which he often perceives and "well" reading.

He resigned in protest over the Police Act of 1976, which apparently was not noticed by anyone else—gives a politically motivated Police Complaints Board the right to determine police discipline. Mark's point—and it is trivial—is that when the police have to deal with politically motivated crowds—as it might in government of the day can be seen in the knowledge that any complaint will be upheld by the government creatures on the board. Up until last year the Chief Officer of Police might be a reactionary running dog, but no one could give him credit for anything but a lack of imagination.

"Something precious and unique, our way of life was being destroyed. . . . Perhaps if you had not been a Chief Constable you would not feel the poignancy as strongly as he does. Let us hope experience will not reach us."

It may seem quirkish to Mark's professional life as he tried hard, honestly did his best, he was good at it and in the end he was forced out. It happened many, but few are honest enough to say so.

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# The formation of a pessimist

By Hugh Lloyd-Jones

CRISTIANO TIMPANARO:  
*La filosofia di Giacomo Leopardi*  
Dati/Roma; Laterza, L.6,000.

Crystiano Timpanaro is at once the most distinguished classical scholar of his time in Italy, a scholar now working in Göttingen, and a brilliant original thinker, who can be read and heard even by the enemies of his ideas. Like all the best Italian scholars of his time, he was a pupil of Giorgio Pasquali (1887-1958) after studying in Göttingen under Wilamowitz and Eduard Schwartz. Many Italians how to make the best use of German scholarship while remaining unimpaired themselves. Shunning the more common works in the office of a publishing house, his brilliant development of the study of the history of a text is known to his classical colleagues, partly through his excellent book *The Classics* (1967), but so far the only work of his available in English is his book *Materialism and The Poet* (1971). In the latter he has been unmissably and devastatingly critical of the work of the last century's philologists. He has shown how many of the mistakes there explained by the theories may be accounted for less exactly but more plausibly by considerations familiar to us from the history of thought. He has shown how many of the mistakes there explained by the theories may be accounted for less exactly but more plausibly by considerations familiar to us from the history of thought.

In 1815 Angelo Mai published the first of his remarkable discoveries in the Ambrosian and Vatican Libraries, the letters of Marcus Aurelius's tutor Fronto. Leopardi at the time was a young man, a habit of seeing Leopardi as a romantic has long been out of fashion. The postwar reaction against the reduction of Leopardi to an "idyllic" poet by Croce, who did not and therefore chose to ignore his intellectual background, reached its furthest point in the *Leopardi progressivo* of Cesare Lupatini. While fully approving the stress laid by Lupatini on the importance of the rationalism which Leopardi derived from the Enlightenment, Timpanaro firmly declines to see him as a kind of proto-Marxist, or as a believer in any form of "the idea of progress". He clearly shows that Leopardi's belief that the whole nature of the universe was necessarily hostile to human aspirations left no room for the idea that society might be re-adjusted in a way that rescued man from the consequences of this condition.

From the start the tendency to a belief in progress which Leopardi's sympathy with eighteenth-century humanism might have been expected to promote was offset by an attitude of titanic defiance of a hostile universe, which seems to have originated from the influence of Alfieri. In this first phase Leopardi thought of Nature as a kindly mother who concealed from her children the real nature of their condition; later he would come to think of her as a cruel stepmother who had condemned them, knowingly to a miserable existence. At the beginning of his career, Leopardi's attitude to the ancient world derived in its essentials from Rousseau. Antiquity exemplified a healthy but primitive way of thinking, sustained by noble illusions, with the coming of Christianity, degeneration had set in.

About 1823 Leopardi became aware that the view of the human condition taken by the early Greeks was in general anything but optimistic; and this discovery not only served to increase his respect for ancient thinking, but helped to confirm him in the belief that man's unhappiness was due to his particular social or political conditions, but to the basic circumstances of his position in the universe. Hellenistic philosophy made a substantial contribution to the philosophy of resignation which Leopardi worked out between 1823 and 1827, the period of the *Operette morali*.

During his last ten years, Leopardi returned to his earlier mood of defiance, against the background of a view of the universe still blacker than that of his earlier phases, and without the Alfierian rhetoric visible in the first period of his work. This was the period of his life in which he devoted least attention to the writings of the ancients; yet the influence of ancient pessimism upon his thought can still be seen.

to the conditions of his time with great clarity and exactitude. In doing so, he has drawn a picture of the intellectual life of the period, or rather of a certain section of that life, which is both fascinating and illuminating; he has also—especially if this book is studied in conjunction with his study of classicism and Humanism—made an important contribution to the understanding of Leopardi's thought.

At first sight Leopardi's scholarly work seems to have nothing whatever to do with poetry. Most of it was done on a mass of authors of the post-classical period, most of it is austere and textual. Leopardi made some admirable emendations; but they were made by means of close attention to the authors' language and style rather than by a startling gift of divination. The *History of Astronomy*, written at fifteen, shows the hand of the future poet. Notes on the third-century Christian chronographer and encyclopaedist Julius Africanus show a grasp of the principles of textual criticism amazing in so young an author. During the period of the "literary conversion", Leopardi made as stylistic exercises several translations from the classics, and the notes which he attached to them contain some serious contributions to knowledge.

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Leopardi wanted. A plan for a complete edition of Cicero likewise floundered; Leopardi knew better than the publisher what such a work involved, and the editorship was transferred to the poet's enemy, the powerful and lascivious bigot Niccolò Tommaseo, with predictably disastrous results. But until 1827 Leopardi continued to produce valuable notes upon the texts of ancient authors. As one might expect, his reading during the period of the *Operette morali* included much Hellenistic philosophy, and the intellectual diary contained in the *Zibaldone* helps us to understand something of its effect upon his thought. But during the last ten years of the poet's life, when the resigned mood of his middle period had yielded to a new "titanic" defiance of the antagonistic universe, he ceased from scholarly activity, handing over all his classical papers to the Swiss scholar Louis de Sinner.

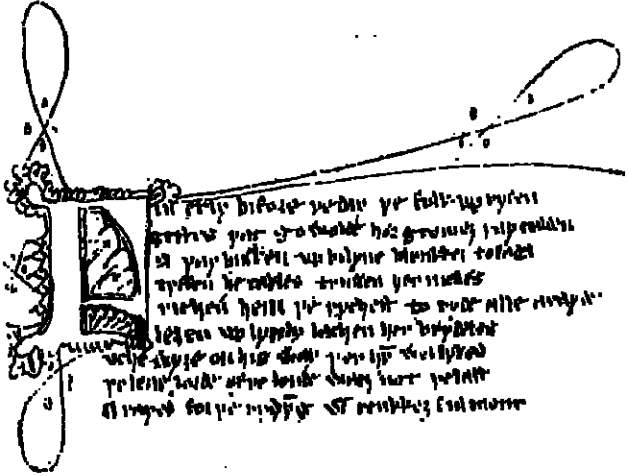
This was partly due to his declining health, and in particular to failing eyesight; but it was also the effect of an increasing preoccupation with his poetry.

The *Zibaldone* helps us to understand the importance for the formation of Leopardi's style of the exact study of language which his scholarship helped to promote. His verse has a clarity and simplicity which has a real affinity with the work of the ancients. But classical antiquity was also an element in his intellectual background, as Timpanaro had demonstrated in the two chapters devoted to Leopardi in his *Classicismo e Illuminismo* (1967). *Ottocento* (1967) is a study of the habit of seeing Leopardi as a romantic has long been out of fashion. The postwar reaction against the reduction of Leopardi to an "idyllic" poet by Croce, who did not and therefore chose to ignore his intellectual background, reached its furthest point in the *Leopardi progressivo* of Cesare Lupatini. While fully approving the stress laid by Lupatini on the importance of the rationalism which Leopardi derived from the Enlightenment, Timpanaro firmly declines to see him as a kind of proto-Marxist, or as a believer in any form of "the idea of progress". He clearly shows that Leopardi's belief that the whole nature of the universe was necessarily hostile to human aspirations left no room for the idea that society might be re-adjusted in a way that rescued man from the consequences of this condition.

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Studies in English Literature 70

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## Up with the Popular Front

By Patrick McCarthy

ALBERT CAMUS:

Fragments d'un combat  
Cahiers Albert Camus 3  
Edited by Jacqueline Lévi-Valensi  
and André Abbon.

Two volumes, 341 and 417pp, 53 and 59fr.

Journaux de voyage

Edited by Roger Quilliot

152pp, 34fr.

Paris: Gallimard.

In *Fragments d'un combat* Jacqueline Lévi-Valensi and André Abbon

have assembled all the articles

which Camus wrote about politics

for the newspaper *Alger-Républicain*

between 1938 and 1940.

Camus's journalism may be divided

into three parts: these articles, the

*Combat* editorials of 1944-47, and

the *Express* pieces on the Algerian

war of 1955-56. The contributions

to *Alger-Républicain* are the least-

known and perhaps the best.

The newspaper itself was found-

ed by a group of Algerian left-

wingers who wanted to drum up

enthusiasm for the Popular Front.

*Alger-Républicain* denounced fasc-

ism and supported the Spanish

Republicans; it defended such

social reforms as 1936 as the forty-

hour week; most important, it cam-

paigned for the Blum-Viollette

plan, which would have given in-

creased political power to the

Arabs in Algeria. The paper's

editor was the intriguing Pascal

Pia. Erudite, intrinsically indepen-

dent and an old friend of Mar-

celine, Pia was to be, after Jean

Guéhen, the second great influence

on Camus. He trained the twenty-

five-year-old Camus as a journa-

list, encouraged his penchant for

irony and imparted to him his own

love of newspapers—Pia worked an

eighty-hour week and corrected

every line of the paper.

Camus's subjects range from

corruption in the Algiers town hall

to the Munich agreement. They

are solid, factual pieces, which

the journalist's slant shows only in

a sarcastic aside on Daladier or in

the outraged introduction to the

series on Kabylia. Camus felt that

the journalist could arouse his

readers more if his prose remained

sober. Most of the articles on Kab-

ylia document the low wages, unem-

ployment and hunger; the cold

statistics made the poverty seem

worse. Camus was in fact a crusad-

ing journalist: his pieces on

Michel Hodant, a civil servant who

helped poor Arab farmers and

duly found himself in prison, are

good muck-raking stuff. His cam-

paign for Cheikh El Okbi, an Arab

leader arrested on a trumped-up

charge of murder, is also an appeal

for Arab rights. As so often in

Camus, there is a tension between

the topic and the concise language.

The editors of these two volumes

have done a superb job of placing

Camus's journalism in its context.

As well as collecting all his pieces,

an arduous task since many were

unsigned, they have divided into the

topics he treats. They provide a

wealth of information about 1930s

Algeria. Much of this goes beyond

Camus; and this *Combat* should be

read by all students of French

Algeria or of the Popular Front.

The editors' demonstration, for ex-

ample, the rise of Arab nationalism

in the years before 1940. Dis-



Voltaire's *Le philosophe* from the *Cri de Paris*, January 23, 1898, showing the furor caused in the ground of good travel-writing. By 1949 *Le Philosophe* had made its famous and he was besieged by diplomats, fashionable women and pretentious poets, all of whom he loathed. His working-class background shows itself in his preference for dance halls and soccer; he was, of course, an ex-golfer. He was also drawn to the "terrible loneliness" of the jungle. Camus, he says, is "the land of indifference". This is a key to Camus's thought: faced with a limitless, empty universe, man responds with indignation which is both a self-assertion and a kind of heroism. Here the scene of pain dominates. Without realising it, Camus was succumbing to a fresh bout of TB. As his depression deepens, he notes the cult of the Brazilian driver who is a pedestrian and do not bother to stop; a passer-by guides the traffic around the corpse. Finally Camus still has to face the plane flight home. He will be shut up in a "steel coffin" and his trans-companions will be a diplomat and a mad psychiatrist. It seems a suitable fate for the author of *L'Étranger*.

## Down with democracy

By Eugen Weber

ZEEV STERNHELL:

La Droite révolutionnaire 1885-1914

Les idées françaises du fascisme

441pp. Paris: Seuil, 84fr.

The time has come to say what

Zeev Sternhell says very clearly:

that on the intellectual front, fin-

de-siècle France was the great

European laboratory of right-wing

ideas. It was from Paris that the neo-

romantic revolt spread, against con-

formity, against bourgeois comfort

and mediocrity, and against the

limits of positivism. Rejecting the

heritage of Enlightenment and of

the great Revolution, refusing the

doctrine of Progress (bolstered by

various apparent achievements), new

ideologies elaborated their refusal

of parliamentary democracy, of

political liberalism, of bourgeois

dominance. And Polish nationalists,

Romanian antisemites, Italian syn-

dicalists sought their inspiration at

the fount of Taine and Renan, fol-

lowed, a generation later, by Drum-

ont and Le Bon, Déroulède and

Barres, Bourget and Blériot, Maurras

and Sorel.

Professor Sternhell, who has

given us a fine book on Barres, the

contemporary of the man

who, having translated his "colère

du Moi" into a "la terre et les morts"

of "la terre et les morts", deter-

mined to write a book: "Once again,

revealing, convincing and timely."

Sternhell raises his challenge

from the shadows of apparent irre-

levance into the centre of the po-

litique of our time. Simply put

(no doubt too simply for the

pages), he argues that, over 400

years, failure to realize the political

of Blériot and the intellectuals of

the Cercle Proudhon worked closely

with communards, Blanquists,

Guesdists and syndicalists, all

moved by common aversion to

parliamentary democracy.

Sternhell makes clear the crucial

role of antisemitism in this pro-

cess: a slight, but not unimportant

built on traditional Christian prej-

udice, but combining social radical-

ism and social Darwinism in an

appealing synthesis. The classic

statements of French antisemitism

were made by socialists of one sort

or another, from Rousseau to Vacher

de Lapouge, the racist anthropolo-

gist whose young disciple, Paul

Valéry, contributed his note to

Major Henry's widow. Given the

poverty of socialist thought and

the radical right, the few as origin

of every social problem of every

economic crisis, grew from figures

of Drumont's imagination into a

plausible explanation for many

socialists. By the end of the 1880s,

anti-liberal, anti-capitalist anti-

semitism appeared as one of many

variants of French nationalism. By

the end of the 1890s, the Ligue

des Patriotes and the Ligue Anti-

semitique had become so powerful

that socialist leadership reacted to

their activities by setting up as

defenders of the Republic.

By taking the side of the liberal

order, the French workers' move-

ment abdicated its revolutionary

role. The alliance of proletarian

and bourgeois was brief. The

League of Patriots was soon perceived

as a "guise" for the game. But inertia

and the acquiescence of the Republic

radical right: Hervé, Lagardelle,

Sorel, would be the forerunners of

Doriot and Déat.

A coincidence of opposition to

liberal democracy and to socialism

coming to terms with it. For Mar-

xism, democracy was un-

nationalist, for revolutionary sym-

bolism it was anti-social; for both

liberalism, capitalism and bour-

geois corruption were the enemy

and both often agreed that Jew-

ry was the essential agency of cor-

ruption. Whatever their differences, com-

mon enemies were crucial.

Nationalists and syndicalists de-

nounced anti-democratic and

anti-conservative, parliamentary

tyranny, the hypocrisy of social

legislation, the whole republic

imposture. Nationalist criticism of

individualism paralleled collective

criticism of liberalism. Maurras

could not accept egalitarianism, in-

tellectual Marxism but, as he

stated, "a socialism freed of its

democratic and cosmopolitan ele-

ments can fit nationalism as a

made glove fits a fine hand."

Events would show how

the two could coincide. In 1930

monarchists and syndicalists came

together in the Cercle Proudhon

inspired by Sorel, blessed by

Maurras, led by Georges Valéry,

who would become a fascist, and



# The reluctant hero Kovács

By George Mikes

DÉNES KOVÁCS:

Örömmel értesítjük  
207pp. Egit Publishing, 105 Almore  
Avenue, Downsview, Ontario,  
Canada M3H 2H4. \$4.

When I received Dénes Kovács's autobiography, I raised my eyebrows. Must everybody write his life-story? I have known Kovács for a long time. I met him soon after he left Hungary after the 1956 Revolution and I knew he was an able journalist. But I also knew he was a somewhat shy, withdrawn and unassuming man, and supposed his story—if he had a story at all—must be the ordinary, conventional, run-of-the-mill story of a Central European intellectual of his age. I had no idea—my old friend had never even hinted at such things—that he was a qualified tombstone-carver, that Sudeten German students had condemned him to death and meant to hang him and that he had been actually (if inefficiently) brought to execution by Hungarian Nazis. Yet the most remarkable feature of his book is not the events that crowd its pages but Kovács's way, pleasantly cynical and aloof way of telling them. He is not a hero; not even a fashionable anti-hero: he is the victim par excellence. He was never in command of his fate; things kept happening to him. All he wanted was a quiet life, but when it came to the crunch he shrugged his shoulders: "Very well, if I must be brave in order to survive, brave I shall be. I don't like it but, like so many cowards before me, I'll be heroic." Many people have survived executions; good humour and cynical detachment survived with very few of them.

Örömmel értesítjük means "We have the pleasure to announce", and it refers to the newspaper announcement by which his parents had the pleasure of announcing that a son was born to them in Budapest

on January 2, 1919. The short-lived communist Revolution was about to break out (in March) and the Kovács family were typical bourgeois people, living in the most distinguished Stefania (now Városliget) Avenue. Kovács remarks that he has always belonged to the wrong group at the wrong time (or perhaps to the right group at the wrong time): he was rich when it was a great virtue to be a penniless proletarian; he was poor when poverty meant no pity, just starvation. He was quite good to be a Jew, but became a Jew when Jews were hunted to death by the Nazis.

His father was a dealer in tombstones but, in spite of his gloomy trade, a sunny character and an incorrigible optimist whose reaction to all calamities and disasters was a shrug of the shoulder and the question, "So what?" His mother, in contrast a great pessimist, always worried about everything, and told her husband in despair: "But Robert, they are going to arrest us, execute us, rob us of all our possessions." Mr Kovács Senior puffed at his cigar happily and replied: "So what?" Mrs Kovács was a religious Jew, Mrs Kovács a baptized Catholic, with all the feelings of superiority and guilt of converted Jews. There are vivid portraits of many members of the family, from great-grandfather, a country grocer beaten to death in full view of his wife and children by angry peasants because he refused to open his shop for them on a holiday, to Uncle Laci, the gentryified Jewish lawyer who played cards with the aristocracy and looked down on his Jewish relatives, but robbed them unscrupulously of their money whenever the opportunity arose. The Kovácses were rich, they threw large parties, their house was full of celebrities all the time, until Mr Kovács went bankrupt and lost everything.

The tombstone business was eventually saved by a Sudeten German called Gessler, and Dénes went to Scaubsdorf, to study in the world's one and only school for tombstone-cutters. (His father was already claiming the Sudetenland

and the province was in a state of turmoil, the station-master at Scaubsdorf, on Kovács's arrival, refused to speak to him because he approached him in German. He insisted on Kovács speaking Czech and when he told him that he did not know that language he was told to go and study in Berlin. In Scaubsdorf he lived in the house of two spinners with a few other German students of his own school. When Herr Gessler's son made it public that Kovács was a Jew, his life became hell. When he appeared in class people started sniffing the air as if he had made it stink with his sheer presence, and asked him, "How d'you do, Mr Kohn?" On one occasion, provoked beyond endurance, he—a small and far from athletic young man—hit one of the big Nazi bullies on the jaw and knocked him out. He got up and told him: "You are lucky I haven't put my knife with me. But we'll meet again." That night a former Budapest schoolfriend and fellow student climbed into his room through the window and warned him that he would be put on "trial" next day and that the sentence had already been passed. "What is it?" Kovács inquired. "Death by hanging, and they must carry it out on the spot." Kovács packed his suitcase and left Scaubsdorf. The patriotic stationmaster who had insisted on Kovács talking Czech on his arrival had already been relieved of his duties and replaced by a German.

Back in Budapest he became a prosperous dealer in tombstones, in charge of his father's firm. He was called up for military service and learnt from the Army Regulations: "Trousers worn by officers, NCOs and men of the Royal Hungarian Army, have two legs; a right leg and a left leg. Having absorbed a great deal of similar knowledge he became an officer. Before demobilization, a general visited them, making a rousing patriotic speech about volunteering for further military service in duty to the fatherland and its glorious German allies and, in the end, telling them in a monolingual tone that if there was anyone among them who did not hunger for military glory he should stop forward, Kovács stepped forward. The general was thunderstruck and asked if there were any other filthy cowards among them. Another thirty filthy cowards stepped forward. Kovács was sent home and lived happily for a year with his tombstones and his girlfriend.

When Hungary became a belligerent, Kovács was called up into a labour battalion. The rest is a tale of barbarism, sadism, corruption, stupidity and some curious—occasionally even funny—incidents. The labour battalion became a "society": there were the rich Jews who corrupted the guards, bought privileges for themselves and played cards while others broke their backs with heavy work; there were the intellectual socialists, always aware of what was going on in the world and analysing the news; and there were the poor helots who worked, suffered and died. The battalion was moved from one northern village to another, working hard and building nothing in particular. As time passed, life became more and more intolerable but suffering was always alleviated by the guards' corruption and gullibility. The Russians got nearer and nearer and Kovács escaped, but was promptly arrested by military police. He had to face a firing-squad with a bunch of others. The soldiers fired, he fell down and thought he was dead; a few hours later he woke up amid a heap of dead bodies and walked away. One of his thumbs had been shot off. He reached a Slovak peasant house and was given food and his wound was dressed.

He joined some military units he met, posing as a soldier who had lost his unit. This time he had to

Modern Hungarian Poetry (289pp. Columbia University Press, \$11.95) is an impressively comprehensive collection of English translations of modern Hungarian poetry, so far almost unknown outside Hungary. The work of forty-one living poets has been included, with a photograph and biographical note for each one. All the poems have been put into their final form by major British, American and Canadian poets—including Donald Davis, Robert

defend himself against benefactors—doctors who wanted to amputate his hand. He told them he was a concert pianist and would rather die than lose his hand. He stayed in hospital for a while. The place was bedlam, the country's collapse nearly complete, the authorities and the military had only one major and kill a few more of them while the going was good. Kovács escaped, was caught, escaped again and was caught again. The near-collapse turned into complete collapse; the Hungarian Nazis and war criminals escaped westward to Austria; the innocent soldiers and the Jews tried to get back to Budapest. At last, he met the first Russian soldier in Bratislava. The Russian saw Kovács's army boots, shouted: "Magyar fascist bandit!" and wanted to shoot him. He was caught twice more by Russian patrols who meant to send him to Siberia, but let him off when he turned out that he was a Jew. The first Russian officer would not take him because he hated Jews; the second because he loved them.

In Budapest Kovács found his family alive and well. They were having lunch when he entered the flat. His mother fainted and his father was so overcome with joy that—in those days of starvation—he offered him his plate full of spaghetti.

My first impression about the book proved, after all, right. This is the average, ordinary, run-of-the-mill story of a Jewish intellectual whose birth was announced with much pleasure in 1919. As Kovács's father would say about his son's story: "So what?"

Graves, Charles Tomlinson, Ted Hughes and Edwin Morgan—working from rough translations. The book is introduced by Miklós Vajda, publisher, critic, journalist, and translator, and literary editor of *The New Hungarian Quarterly*, an English-language magazine published in Budapest. This is the first volume in a projected series of translations to be published in arrangement with the Translation

## The vivisector at his window

J.S. Prawer

MUSIL: WORKS

Volume 1, 1,051pp

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Edited by Adolf Frisid

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becoming an acknowledged classic, as Klopstock found out and as Lessing knew when he made his own epigrams address their potential readers:

Wer wird nicht einen Klopstock loben?

Doch wird ihn jeder lesen?—Nein.

Wir wollen weniger erbohen

Und fleissiger gelesen sein.

(Who would not praise a writer like Klopstock? But will everyone read him? No, alas. We would prefer to be less highly extolled and more diligently read.)

The new edition differs from the three case-bound volumes previously devoted to Musil's collected works in more important respects than appearance and price. It contains a number of significant texts—reviews, essays, drafts, a handful of poems—which the earlier collection had missed. The principles on which the later portion of Musil's unfinished masterpiece, *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*, were edited have been rethought, and a radically new presentation of the posthumous portions has resulted. No longer do we get the unhappy contamination of early and late drafts which have been so widely and so rightly criticized. Book I, chapters 1-123, and Book II, chapters 1-38, are

based, as before, on the text published and corrected by the author between 1930 and 1933, but their wording, spelling and punctuation have been newly checked and revised.

Chapters 39-58 of Book II are now set up from galleyproofs corrected and in many cases substantially amended by Musil; and all the chapters and chapter-fragments that follow have been characterized and printed as drafts, dated as accurately as possible, and explained by a voluminous and detailed apparatus of notes and variants. This means that we no longer find a chapter like "Die Reise ins Paradies", of which the draft we have belongs to an early stage in Musil's conception, printed between chapters written at a later stage, and artificially assimilated to that stage by editorial alteration of the names the younger Musil had given to his characters.

It also means that we now encounter the chapter on which the author was working when he died, the solemnly beautiful "Atemzüge eines Sommertags", no less than four times in Volume 4 of the set—to say nothing of portions and phrases in the apparatus contained in Volume 5. No doubt textual ex-

pert have already set to work to test the accuracy and the degree of completeness of the editor's labours. The printed text now reflects clearly, however, the unfinished state in which Musil's sudden death left the later parts of the novel, the provisional nature of the final chapters, and the author's own hesitation between different versions, different formulations. It does all this while still providing a text that can be read without constant interruption by footnotes and interlinear variants.

There is yet another difference between the pocket-book set and the previously available collected edition. In that three-volume set of 1952-57, 586 pages of Volume 2 had been devoted to excerpts from Musil's diaries. This section has now disappeared; but as compensation (and what a compensation it turns out to be!) the publishers have made available a complete transcription of these diaries, with a long and detailed apparatus of explanatory notes and indexes, in a handsome but expensive hardback set. "Expensive" is a relative term: if one considers the editorial labour that has gone into the apparatus alone—with its patient tracing of hundreds of names and contemporary allusions,

the adventure begins on the very first page of the very first notebook, after the heading "Lebens vom Night-Book of M le Vivisecteur".

I live in the polar region, for when I step to my window I see nothing but quiet white level surfaces that serve the night as a pedestal. Organic isolation surrounds me; I rest as though under a covering of ice 100 metres thick. A covering of this kind gives the eye of a man so snugly buried a certain perspective—a perspective known only to those who have placed 100 metres of ice over their eyes. That's how it looks from inside outwards. And inwards from the outside? I remember a gaze I once saw interned in a piece of rock-crystal. Because of an aesthetic predisposition which I have not yet submitted to the controlled test of reason, gnats

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Chapters 39-58 of Book II are now set up from galleyproofs corrected and in many cases substantially amended by Musil; and all the chapters and chapter-fragments that follow have been characterized and printed as drafts, dated as accurately as possible, and explained by a voluminous and detailed apparatus of notes and variants. This means that we no longer find a chapter like "Die Reise ins Paradies", of which the draft we have belongs to an early stage in Musil's conception, printed between chapters written at a later stage, and artificially assimilated to that stage by editorial alteration of the names the younger Musil had given to his characters.

It also means that we now encounter the chapter on which the author was working when he died, the solemnly beautiful "Atemzüge eines Sommertags", no less than four times in Volume 4 of the set—to say nothing of portions and phrases in the apparatus contained in Volume 5. No doubt textual ex-

pert have already set to work to test the accuracy and the degree of completeness of the editor's labours. The printed text now reflects clearly, however, the unfinished state in which Musil's sudden death left the later parts of the novel, the provisional nature of the final chapters, and the author's own hesitation between different versions, different formulations. It does all this while still providing a text that can be read without constant interruption by footnotes and interlinear variants.

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I live in the polar region, for when I step to my window I see nothing but quiet white level surfaces that serve the night as a pedestal. Organic isolation surrounds me; I rest as though under a covering of ice 100 metres thick. A covering of this kind gives the eye of a man so snugly buried a certain perspective—a perspective known only to those who have placed 100 metres of ice over their eyes. That's how it looks from inside outwards. And inwards from the outside? I remember a gaze I once saw interned in a piece of rock-crystal. Because of an aesthetic predisposition which I have not yet submitted to the controlled test of reason, gnats

becoming an acknowledged classic, as Klopstock found out and as Lessing knew when he made his own epigrams address their potential readers:

Wer wird nicht einen Klopstock loben?

Doch wird ihn jeder lesen?—Nein.

Wir wollen weniger erbohen

Und fleissiger gelesen sein.

(Who would not praise a writer like Klopstock? But will everyone read him? No, alas. We would prefer to be less highly extolled and more diligently read.)

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are for me something that insults me—let us call it "feeling for beauty." It was quite different with the one that I saw under the crystal that time.

Through its enclosure in a strange medium the insect lost its isolated details, what one might term "biological-personality," and appeared to me simply as a dark level surface with delicate configurations attached to it. I remember having this same feeling about people too, people I saw in some light-wear evening as black dots on grass-green hills shuffling along an orange-yellow sky...

The atmosphere of that "licht-milder Abend" at the end, with its crepuscular colour effects, is clearly indescribable, and the lack of the acerbity that will invade the diaries more and more.

Nevertheless, much of the essential Musil is already present in these words written at the age of nineteen or twenty. The character of "M. le Viviseur," for instance, which he had assumed peculiarly apt for the social analyst that Musil was soon to become, for the man would use his diaries to anatomize his contemporaries in their own terms, in his fiction, into figures belonging firmly to their own particular place while exhibiting mechanisms of thought and instinct to be found in other times and other places. Vivisection is not a bad description of what Musil's diaries do when they talk of Kafka, of Thomas Mann, or Karl Kraus, or the psychoanalyst. It is one of several scientific images in these opening pages—their laboratory ambience will soon be strengthened by the idea of "controlled testing," the phrase "putting under a microscope," and—in later pages—the key-term "experimental."

Musil is one of the few modern writers, we remember, who came to know from first-hand experience how modern mathematics, ex-logistics operate.

When we learn, however, what this "vivisection" is actually doing, we find him not at all intent—in this early passage—on anatomizing his contemporaries. We watch him, rather, looking out into the landscape, trying to convey what he sees together with what he feels, by means of an analogy: the image, disturbing in its quietness and deadness, of a polar region before which he stands as if under ice 100 metres thick. In good Romantic tradition he follows it up with a journey inward; and he brings back not vague fantasies, however, but a precise memory-picture (the gut in rock-crystal) and the feelings and thoughts clustering around it. Suspicious of received terminology—"let us call it 'feeling for beauty' (Schönheitsgefühl)"—Musil demonstrates, by means of a physical image in which observation and memory, the unique and habitual merge, how "feeling" and "distant" combine to transport us into that special region of perceptions and feelings which has been the traditional province of aesthetics.

The position in which we meet the vivisection is one in which Musil frequently places his protagonists: at the window peering out, their experiences circumscribed by the window-frame, the time of day fades, as it is limited by their personalities, as their keenness or dullness of perception, their presuppositions, their memories, their moods. It is, strictly speaking, a landscape that he looks at as if it were like, although what he dredges up from his memory turns out to be, as in a more famous piece from his last *Novellen*, "Lapzeiten," the "image" of an insect, which really interest him are human beings: the man who watches and the man he sees. As yet these images appear only as black dots moving in a field of yellow, orange, and green; but they will come nearer and nearer to us as the diaries proceed on their course.

Musil's descriptions, as we see, adopt a strictly defined perspective and one of the many delights of *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* will be, precisely, the way in which linear narrative is shattered out by "perspektivisches Erzählen," revealing that lets us see phenomena and incidents from the perspectives of different characters. And behind these characters, leading us from one to the other and enabling us to watch them as they see, feel and act, stands the implied narrator, detached, ironic, frequently humorous, with a few mechanisms that move men and affairs. This too is anticipated by

"Leaves from the Night-book of M. le Viviseur": in the transformation of the Austrian landscape into a polar one (how much this tells us about the state of mind of the young observer!), and in the use of surprising but strangely apt terms. The gut, we find, has been "interiorized" (interiorized is a rock-crystal: a subtle reflection of the feelings of the young man from whose memories the insect has been dredged up, a young man in an *Internat*—a residential educational establishment like that which Musil was soon to describe in *Die Verwirrungen des Zöglings Törless* (1906).

He will actually use the term "Internat-Perspektiven" a few lines lower down. This narrative perspective stands in piquant relation to the irony and black humour of the passage—the straight-faced assumption, for instance, that a man trying to peer at the world from heaven is a hundred metres thick would be "snug."

It is characteristic of Musil's way with language that he should transform the normal "day-book" or "diary" (*Tagebuch*) into its opposite, a "night-book" or *Nachtbuch*. He is interested, from the first, in potentialities and possibilities, in seeing things from every side—the "day-vision" that accounts for so much in his diaries, his essays and his narrative works, must be supplemented by a "night-vision," the view of the scientific and detached observer calls for the complementary view of the poet and "secular mystic." No wonder that political and social doctrines have always been uncomfortable with him; he emigrated when the Nazis came to power without endorsing himself to the communists, and he even dared—as his diaries show—to look steadily at the contradictions and dangers of parliamentary democracy. Seeing many sides, adopting many perspectives, never making him ready to compromise, the key-term "vivisection" is, however, it made him, rather, the kind of "vivisection" who demonstrates, often painfully, how human beings work, how our ideologies operate, how our vocabularies define and limit us. It also made him believe that striving towards an *Überwindung*, a condition transcending the dual mechanism of common sense, place thinking and feeling, was a more public writing, now made available to everyone, they will have performed the most useful service of all.

Musil-scholarship, an international enterprise conducted in Austria, West Germany, England, Italy and the United States, has been and is for the apostolic fervour with which cherished views have been defended against diverse types of heresy, in the course of polemics conducted within and across the national frontiers, a large number of books have been hurled in the direction of the editor of the collected works under the Rovinski imprint. He himself readily admits that the editorial decisions which went into the 1952 version of *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* were not always the right ones, and explains how he was led to take some of these decisions by lack of information and material that has since become available. To the extent that the often harsh criticisms levelled at him have impelled him to improve the new edition—and there can be no doubt that it is an improvement—we must be grateful to those who made them. It was his persistence, his energy, his curiosity and his steadfast devotion to Musil's work which has assured that it is now so widely and delightfully accessible. Is it not time that someone expressed publicly what a debt of gratitude non-specialists owe to Dr. Fris's editions owe to him? Perhaps I may do so on my own behalf, and on behalf of the many readers of the TLS who, ever since that now famous front-page essay of October 26, 1968, which laid the foundations of Musil's international fame, have found their lives enriched by Musil's fictions.

One of the most important functions Musil's strange and of utopianism had to fulfil was to provide a background of potentiality and possibility; against this the actual world, realistically evoked, satirized and caricatured, and the diurnal mechanism of common sense, place thinking and feeling, was a more public writing, now made available to everyone, they will have performed the most useful service of all.

Musil never wrote his autobiography—that endeavour too, like so many others, was transformed into the fiction of *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*; but his diaries provide for us with a wealth of impressive detail. They depict his frequently strained relations with his fellow-men in different political, social and national surroundings; his encounters with contemporary fads and fashions; his ever-renewed attempts to come to terms with twentieth-century science, philosophy, psychology and literature; his constant disappointments (the only writers he seems to like, he says ruefully at one time, are dead ones); and his equally constant endeavours to make his own country and relationships into grist for the mill of his art. A fair-sized portion of European life, thought and art is surveyed in the course of this endeavour; but he "vivisections" himself too, shows up the alter ego he constructs for himself, his contradictions, his erotic tastes and tendencies, his attitude of detachment and non-alignment which constantly impels him—paradoxically—to take political and social decisions.

Reading these pages in conjunction with Musil's fictional narratives

## Weimar for historians

PETER D. STACHURA,  
The Weimar Era and Hitler 1918-1933  
A Critical Bibliography  
293pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press, £25.40.

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Jonathan Steinberg

# Reading, writing and revolution

By Patrice Higonnet

JEAN FURET and JACQUES OZOUF (Editors):  
L'écriture des Français de 1789 à Jules Ferry.  
June 1, 379pp. 45fr. Volume 2, 35fr.  
Éditions de Minuit

COSE CHERVEL  
Il faut apprendre à écrire à la petite Française  
Édition de la grammataire scolaire  
May, Paris: Payot

The theory of modern France since 1850 revolves around a double paradox: the rapid evolution of modern political structures amid sluggish material progress. Why were there revolutions in 1789 and 1848 in France and not elsewhere, a more advanced and industrialized society? How did a revolutionary tradition beget a peasant nation that lived in towns of less than 100 inhabitants? And how could a country where, as Lord Zeldin has reminded us, "the tastes and tastes of doctors and dentists were so distinct?"

Partly economic or political reasons soon come to a dead end. Inevitably, many French scholars have gravitated instead towards cultural explanations of one sort or another. François Furet and Jacques Ozouf ask why it was that some Frenchmen and not others learned how to read and write, and what the correlation was between public writings, now made available to everyone, they will have performed the most useful service of all.

Musil-scholarship, an international enterprise conducted in Austria, West Germany, England, Italy and the United States, has been and is for the apostolic fervour with which cherished views have been defended against diverse types of heresy, in the course of polemics conducted within and across the national frontiers, a large number of books have been hurled in the direction of the editor of the collected works under the Rovinski imprint. He himself readily admits that the editorial decisions which went into the 1952 version of *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* were not always the right ones, and explains how he was led to take some of these decisions by lack of information and material that has since become available. To the extent that the often harsh criticisms levelled at him have impelled him to improve the new edition—and there can be no doubt that it is an improvement—we must be grateful to those who made them. It was his persistence, his energy, his curiosity and his steadfast devotion to Musil's work which has assured that it is now so widely and delightfully accessible. Is it not time that someone expressed publicly what a debt of gratitude non-specialists owe to Dr. Fris's editions owe to him? Perhaps I may do so on my own behalf, and on behalf of the many readers of the TLS who, ever since that now famous front-page essay of October 26, 1968, which laid the foundations of Musil's international fame, have found their lives enriched by Musil's fictions.

There is a mine of information in the two books, the first of which is the more general, the second a collection of eight essays by other colleagues, each with a particular regional or historical focus. Volume Two is a more detailed and more analytical work, a great deal to English readers, the book is peppered with recent additions to the knowledge of French history, and it is a pleasure to read and write about it. The book is a pleasure to read and write about it. The book is a pleasure to read and write about it.

The intellectual framework of the two books is contemporary French history, the history of the French Revolution, but they are not just a collection of essays. They are a collection of essays. They are a collection of essays. They are a collection of essays.

Most interesting is the statistical evidence on those people, fairly numerous in some places like Brittany, who could read but not write. Furet and Ozouf demonstrate convincingly that the areas where such people resided were those in which the Church in 1800 had been for a century the driving force behind educational reform: *curés* wanted their parishioners to read, and the like, but they were not writing. Hence the authors' discovery that the ability to "read only" was a sign of backwardness in northern France, where the demand for education was still low, and that literacy in the south was a sign of the choice lay between complete illiteracy and a clerically-inspired desire to read but not to write.

The relationship of literacy to modernization is approached in this book from widely different perspectives. The authors of the first volume, one of whom teaches part-time at the University of Michigan, which houses the Inter-University Consortium on Social Research, rely heavily on quantification.

Starting from a survey made in the 1870s by a school inspector named Magliolo of the incidence of signatures on marriage contracts throughout France since the 1690s, they draw a number of suggestive conclusions. Furet and Ozouf themselves allow that much of what they say was known already, but it bears restatement, they think, because most of Magliolo's conclusions can now be shown more conclusively to have been right all along. A major difference between the work and that of *Revue de Magliolo*, however, is their claim to objectivity. Furet and Ozouf are clonemakers who take pains to emphasize the value-free nature of their work. Magliolo, they specifically point out, was a man of letters, a man who had been sacked by the new Third Republic and had an ulterior motive. His aim was to show that the spread of literacy in France had come long before the Revolution whose heirs were now persecuting him. Furet and Ozouf condemn such motivations. They are neither for nor against literacy. They reject "une hiérarchie quelconque de civilisation" and endorse Stendhal's reflections on the ambiguity of modern life: the Département du Nord was doubtless more civilized than Corsica, but who were the great men from the Département du Nord? The facts must speak for themselves, and the authors, it seems, had no choice in reaching conclusions that were politicized historians will dislike.

In any case, the main conclusions are roughly these: literacy, especially for women, rose steadily from the 1690s onwards. In 1789, it was much higher north of the "Magliolo line" which ran roughly from St. Malo to Geneva. After 1800, the geography of literacy gradually changed: southern and southwestern France caught up, leaving in the middle what Stendhal called a "fatal triangle", running roughly from Brest to Bayonne to Valence, where illiteracy, Catholicism, and superstition reigned supreme.

Furet and Ozouf quantify Magliolo's figures and present to us the verdict of *l'ordinateur*. By using regressions and correlations, they show that the ability to read was a valid test of the more general ability to read and write. Before quantification this connection was not obvious. It has been argued by historians like Gaston that many peasants could sign but not write, even when they were of a modern frame of mind. Peasants in the *Île de France* who had learnt to sign their names might go on to acquire other skills (like reading), while a peasant might wish to learn only to sign his name: what use was it to learn to read and write in French, a language he could not understand? Since most Frenchmen in 1789 could speak broken French at best, and since 10 per cent of them could still speak no French whatever in 1867 the issue of consequence. Furet and Ozouf's texts are convincing here. Signatures are a valid test after all.

Most interesting is the statistical evidence on those people, fairly numerous in some places like Brittany, who could read but not write. Furet and Ozouf demonstrate convincingly that the areas where such people resided were those in which the Church in 1800 had been for a century the driving force behind educational reform: *curés* wanted their parishioners to read, and the like, but they were not writing. Hence the authors' discovery that the ability to "read only" was a sign of backwardness in northern France, where the demand for education was still low, and that literacy in the south was a sign of the choice lay between complete illiteracy and a clerically-inspired desire to read but not to write.

What is the correlation between schools and literacy? Stendhal thought that a minister of the interior who was serious about the job could have wiped out the "fatal triangle" with 2 million francs' worth of schools a year. Furet and Ozouf disagree. Time and again their facts and figures show that schools in themselves did not make much difference. In the Alps, where there were no schools, rates of literacy were high; conversely, schools "parachuted" into hostile environments did not have much effect. The irrelevance of schools is a persistent *ritornello* here, with one important variation.

While the efforts of Jules Ferry in the nineteenth century were beside the point, since most French children were already literate by 1870, the efforts of the Church in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries did make a difference. The Church at that time had elaborated "une véritable idéologie de l'école" which for Furet and Ozouf constituted both a religious adventure and a tool of social modernization. All schools are useless, but some schools are more useless than others.

What then did the Revolution do about literacy? Nothing much, we are told. Literacy was rising before 1789 and continued to do so although the Revolution did not substitute anything of substance for the clerical system of education that it destroyed. The key word, Furet and Ozouf repeat, is continuity. There was continuity during the Revolution because the state merely took over what the Church had been doing since it had to meet the *diffé* Protestant of Reformation times. And there was continuity after the Revolution because the state then abandoned its efforts to educate and withdrew from the business of elementary education, returning to the conditions of before 1789. Hence Furet's and Ozouf's overall conclusion that the debate about schools in nineteenth-century France was much ado about nothing. Societies moderate at their own pace. What is inevitable will necessarily occur. Marx, they think, was right in railing against "illusory" political change, namely, the social change depends on the political will of men.

The authors' view of modernization and the growth of literacy is directly related to their use of quantification. But quantification is only one of the scientific tools on which Furet and Ozouf rely. Much of their value-free analysis, like most of the work presented in the second volume by their colleagues, relies on more traditional interpretation of documents. I think it fair to say, however, that the marriage between their two approaches is not always harmonious, and for a simple reason. The figures drawn up by Magliolo and his associates were fitted to geographical categories, essentially departments. Hence social cleavages within these geographical categories did not appear in their full force. This dilemma is not improved by being "quantified," as appears clearly from the authors' contradictory verdicts about the role of the city in the evolution of the ability to read and write.

In the first chapters of the book, which are based on quantification, the authors categorically insist on the "immense continuity" that separates urban and rural France. There they say, two histories of literacy, an urban and a rural one. These are not without links, "mais (elles) n'ont pas une même pesanteur". None the less, much of what comes after in both Volume One and Two shows precisely the reverse.

After statements on the city pure and simple come the distinctions that must be made *de ville à ville*, and gradually we arrive at another (and to my mind correct) conclusion that the most valid context of analysis is the urbanization at all, but as a structure. "Parfois, toujours, la stratification sociale domine l'infrastructure de l'alphabétisation". Similar observations are made in the second volume. Thus, in the *Vienne*, peasants who moved to the city did not become urbanized; and in describing the *Vexin français*,

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At Jeanneret reminds us gently that we must be cautious in thinking that cities per se are an acculturation milieu because professional groups that are economically equivalent have similar rates of literacy in town and country.

Cities, then, are no more a matrix of literacy than is religion per se (since poor Protestants had lower rates of literacy than rich Catholics). Within cities, as Furet and Ozouf themselves point out, literacy varied enormously from class to class: at Rouen, it went from 98 per cent to 37 per cent in different quarters of the city. The point is obvious, and it is of course made by the authors themselves.

The confusion here underlines the pitfalls of much quantitative work. Though useful in many respects, quantification is also dangerous because it allows the very process of presentation of unsuitable categories.

Chervel's book also has an implicit message about the cultural context of education, although his ostensible subject is simply the history of grammar as taught to French children from 1780 to the present. His concern is a particular one of school curriculum: by contrast, Furet and Ozouf would presumably argue that what was taught in the schools did not make much difference since the very existence of schools was somehow irrelevant to the inevitable social process of modernization. Chervel's central thesis is that the French School Grammar (FSG) which emerged in the nineteenth century was a pseudo-science. Though it claimed to be a coherent approach to language, as demonstrated by the fact that it could justify the teaching of French orthography, FSG was in truth an incoherent justification of irrational orthographic quibbles. Chervel works within the framework of certain professional assumptions, such as the existence of a true linguistic science (of which FSG was a deformation), a science which was first recognized by Saussure.

Many historians will find this book as a result too narrow and rebarbative. This will be a pity. Although Chervel himself does not develop the connection, his book, as I shall try to show, is an important link in the present debate about the social nature of linguistic policies.

The course of instruction in grammar, as Chervel describes it, runs downhill almost all the way. In the beginning, all was well, since the attention of eighteenth-century grammarians was focused, as it should have been, on words as signs taken in their relation to each other in the context of language considered as a systemic whole. For the heirs of the seventeenth-century Port Royal Grammar, language was the image of thought, and the goal of linguistic and grammatical study was to discover through language the laws of reason and universal logic. Before 1750, then, orthography was not involved in grammar. Grammarians had more noble concerns; and, in any case, orthography was no preoccupation because French spelling was steadily reformed to follow shifts in speech: *miglois* of 1700 became, in 1800, *anglais*; the letter *h* was dropped from *author*, *from* *adieu*, and *from* *february*. Just as many elements had been quietly dropped in the seventeenth century. Conversely, spelling rules which later appeared to be baroque still made some small phonetic sense in eighteenth-century aristocratic French because words like *ami*, *ami*, and *ami* were differently pronounced. Eighteenth-century General Grammar, as it came to be called, was quite distinct from the nineteenth-century French School Grammar.

For the grammarians *philosophes* in the tradition of Port Royal, syntax was not about isolated phrases but about verbal structures, or the latter school grammarians, however, elements within sentences became crucial: clauses, periods and spelling. How was the transition made from Enlightenment General Grammar (EGG) to French School Grammar? As one might have foreseen, the Revolution witnessed the ephemeral triumph of EGG. At one level, it was recognized by men like Danton that French spelling be made systematically phonetic. At another level, the universal logic of EGG became the heart of the curriculum at the newly founded *Écoles Centrales* and grammar was Stendhal's favourite subject at school. In Grenoble,

The collapse of the Revolution put away the EGG. The decline of grammar from the study of logic to the study of spelling and phraseology. The massive question which the school would ask of him is this: why did the French Institute and put up with the first and second

had been a touchstone. As Destutt de Tracy explained, "cette science fut l'attention qu'on eut à Grammaire générale, si l'on n'a égard qu'au moyen, et l'usage si l'on ne considère que le but". But Bonaparte, disgusted by the *Idéologues*, primary education was handed back to the Church, and secondary education, now geared to the study of Mathematics and Latin rather than French, became in many ways more retrograde than had been true before 1789.

Gradually, the General Grammar was completely overshadowed by the French-speaking Switzerland) by that "monstrous" first School Grammar. Its antecedents went back to Lhomond's *Éléments de grammaire française*, which was published in 1780 and reissued 750 times by 1893. Its opaque course in 1820-70 when its pseudo-principles were improved and codified by the the villain of the piece, Chapsal. Condillac had been a *grammairien philosophe*; Chapsal was a *grammairien professeur* who brought the chateau with the proceeds of his book and, at his death, endowed a fund for retired grammar teachers. It was, says Chervel, the last he could do.

The central intent of Chervel's book is to analyse and pulverize this *grammaire scolaire*, whose focus was spelling rather than syntax. The task of the lowly school grammarians, he explains, was difficult: they were committed to explain orthographic variants, but this became progressively more involved as phonetic usage changed. The rules were always false at first, they came to seem increasingly absurd, especially after 1835 when the Academy refused to take further account of changes in pronunciation. Necessarily, school grammar was driven to justify itself by invoking principles that were increasingly byzantine, like the rules governing the declension of the past participle ("elle s'est laissée mourir", but "elle s'est laissée admettre" under 1870, the first FSG collapsed under the weight. Democratization had made of education a serious business. The old system could not go on. *Pauvres, malheureux enfants!* wrote a former minister of education, "qu'en avez-vous fait pour six années de la vie?" Once the parents of the *pauvres enfants* had this voice, something had to be done.

A second *grammaire scolaire* was therefore worked out. Unfortunately, it proved worse than the first. The new FSG was "un bric-à-brac informe de mille puissions" whose justification was an arid theory of functions still concerned with anachronistic spelling and the composition of phrases and clauses, rather than the sentence as a whole. In consequence, imaginary functional relationships were postulated, and parts of speech were codified and reclassified ad infinitum. Even the authorities took fright, and in July, 1910, the Minister of Education decreed that students would henceforth be required to know only those grammatical terms that had been in official use in the *enseignement français*.

By the 1920s disenchantment was almost complete. Eminent grammarians like Brunot, author of a masterful seventeen-volume study of the French language, condemned FSG. But Brunot's desire to revivify this grammar by injecting into it the vigour of the *sermon* of diachronic grammar was fruitless. Only a Saussurian awareness of synchronic grammar would have been of use, but French School Grammar had from the first resolutely turned its back on the synchronic principles of eighteenth-century General Grammar. French School Grammar suffered from original sin and could not be reformed. It could not move from a concern for the phraseology to a concern for the word as a sign within a logical system. In fact, says Chervel, the situation is still hopeless today. To School Grammarians have taken over some of the principles evolved by Saussure, Chomsky, Benveniste and others, but they have done so only in order to support their ideologically-charged, *le langage des écoles* of *l'Académie*. One might say, "mais c'est pour le *monstre*".

Chervel describes as "une petite catastrophe nationale" the decline of grammar from the study of logic to the study of spelling and phraseology. The massive question which the school would ask of him is this: why did the French Institute and put up with the first and second

FSG? Chervel gives a partial answer: because orthography had become the standard of bourgeois respectability. Neither Mme de Sévigné nor Voltaire could have qualified for graduation from a mid-nineteenth-century grammar school for spelling *cela* with two *l's*, the *monstrous* of the top and spread downwards. In 1874, the *Certificat d'Études Primaires* institutionalized the issue. Those who could not spell would not qualify for state jobs. The mastery of the past participle had become the functional equivalent of *les bonnes manières* and the rules of *bonnes manières*.

Chervel does not, however, go on to describe for us the social significance of this orthographic obsession. Granted that orthography was a fetish, why was it so and what did it make? Chervel has given us a study which is technically fascinating but more technological than historical. He has written a history of French School Grammar rather than a history of the uses of grammar as a social divider. It may seem unfair for a reviewer to reason from a perspective that it is not the author's own; but I think Chervel's to be an important subject. I may be forgiven for doing precisely this.

The occasional references which Chervel makes to Renée Balibar's *Le Français national* could be developed to provide such a social explanation of orthographic conservatism. The essential characteristic of Renée Balibar's French Republicanism was its claim that the French by virtue of their citizenship would be able to transcend social relationships that had been left materially untouched. Peasants who had come to be seen as *citoyens* would not mind being landless as before. The system worked well enough from a bourgeois point of view. None the less, the possessing class from time to time concluded that even abstract citizenship was too much. Having given the masses access to the French language (by creating schools or *salles de lecture*) it then invented a *français fictif* which only bourgeois children had the time to learn. Grammar, be it *latinisante* as Balibar thinks or orthographically ossified as Chervel would have it, became a weapon of class warfare. Grammatical hegemony, so to speak, was used to bolster the dominance of the bourgeois class in a society where all men were citizens and where the weight of anti-capitalist traditionalism was very strong.

Of course, many, and perhaps most, societies, have linguistic quirks that serve as social markers, but none have developed these as purposefully as did the French after 1800. In England, accents are a threshold; but in France, despite the fact that the accents of the *seizième* and of the *fin de siècle* are to be sure tolerably distinct, the test of acceptability has traditionally been the ability to spell and to round a phrase rather than to "speak white". Similarly, "dialect" French oratory, *français* as it is called, is primarily in public by upper-class Englishmen is roughly the same language syntactically that is used by them in private, and the same holds true for Boston Brahmins and Virginia P.K.'s (First Families and aged readers of the *Figaro*, no Frenchman speaks privately in a public language which is *français* in school and must be used in public speeches.

More important yet, English or American accents are learnt at home or in conspicuously elitist schools like Eton or Phillips Exeter. An overtly hierarchical society overtly secretes a hierarchy of accents. In France, however, the linguistic and grammatical duplication of the bourgeoisie was foisted on the public by unwelcome letterschoolteachers, acting in the name of the "Grands Principes de 1789". From a conservative point of view, the result was ideological politics: a people who powerless to act against the rules for the past century, that "national catastrophe" of grammar is not really a catastrophe. In Chervel's book, however, it is the mark of fine scholarship that it should raise as many questions as it resolves. It will in any case mind historians that subjects might grammar, which most of them might think esoteric, can provide an illuminating insight into basic questions of social and political history.

REVIEWS

## The clerk from the convent

by Theodore Zeldin

Madeline Barbin dite Alexina B.  
Édition by Michel Foucault  
Paris: Gallimard, 25fr.

In February 1868, in a bedsitter in the Latin Quarter of Paris, Abel Barbin, a thirty-year-old railway clerk, was found dead, having committed suicide by gassing himself. He had been one of the puzzling, enigmatic figures of the Second Empire, a clerk of twenty, he had been a girl, brought up in a convent, trained in a girls' teachers' training college, and he had then worked as a schoolmistress in a small town. In 1860 a medical examination revealed him to be a hermaphrodite, with partially male and partially female sexual organs, capable of assuming either role, though sterile in both cases. He was adjudged to be more male than female; his birth certificate stated that he took up life as a man. The case aroused considerable medical interest as well as curiosity among newspaper gossip writers. It might have been forgotten had Barbin not left, as a result of suicide note, a rather remarkable autobiography.

Barbin had come top in the school college examinations. He was a fluent writer and a keen diarist. His autobiography reads like a novel—not a great one, for he is too concerned with himself and not enough with the world around him, but an interesting and moving novel, which contains an element of mystery, this giving, as far as one can judge, an accurate account of real life.

Why, with his obvious ability, did he not make a new life for himself? Two major impediments were his past life as a nun, and a way that was frustratingly elusive. He had been, as he said, terrified by his experi-

ence. He had feared, as he put it, "the unknown" that awaited him when he was forced out of his cloistered existence; he had been appalled by his lack of knowledge of men, with whom he was suddenly to mix freely in a radically different way. Sometimes he kept his nerve; sometimes he managed to cope with his new life. But he never got over his feeling of being alone, an anomaly, unable to marry, to have a family. He dared not even accept a prostitute, lest his peculiarity should lead her to reject him "as though I were a reptile". It was the conviction that there was no place for him in the world, a conviction strengthened by his difficulties in getting employment to match his talents, and sometimes any employment at all, that finally made him give up.

Barbin could not have found a new vocation because he was unwilling to use his extraordinary experience to interpret the problem of what would now be called transsexuals and gender roles. He came to the conclusion that it was not profitable for men to understand better how women feel. He argued indeed that it was necessary for there to be a limit to the knowledge that man has of women, and that it would be dangerous to overstep this limit. Man's faculties are incapable of making the leap; his happiness requires that he does not attempt to make it. Barbin said that he himself, knowing women too well, would have had to marry a woman who would be poisoned ones; he would be tempted to exploit his knowledge, and his advantage would, therefore, work against him. But he never elaborated on what this mysterious knowledge consisted of.

No one, in any case, seemed all that keen to understand Barbin. The advice he received from those to whom he revealed his secret expressed a sort of determination to avoid the problem he posed. His confessor told him to keep quiet about it and to become a nun. His doctor said he must resign his teaching post but could suggest nothing beyond that. His headmistress, with whose daughter he had been sleeping, transferred his continuing this public quasi-lesbian relationship, rather than reveal the doctor's diagnosis, which would bring scandal on the school. His parish priest humiliated him with cruel accusations and offered him word of comfort. The senior government official involved (the prefect) advised him to emigrate. But the local bishop was kind to him, and his own family stood by him.

Though he lived in an age when women had fewer rights than men, he saw no great advantage in becoming a man. Each sex had its own problems. He was used to those facing women, and the completeness of the masculine world proved too tough and merciless for his privileges to be overwhelmingly attractive. He had grown used to the niche he had made for himself as a schoolmistress, but his abnormality became an insuperable obstacle in the way of his continuing to teach.

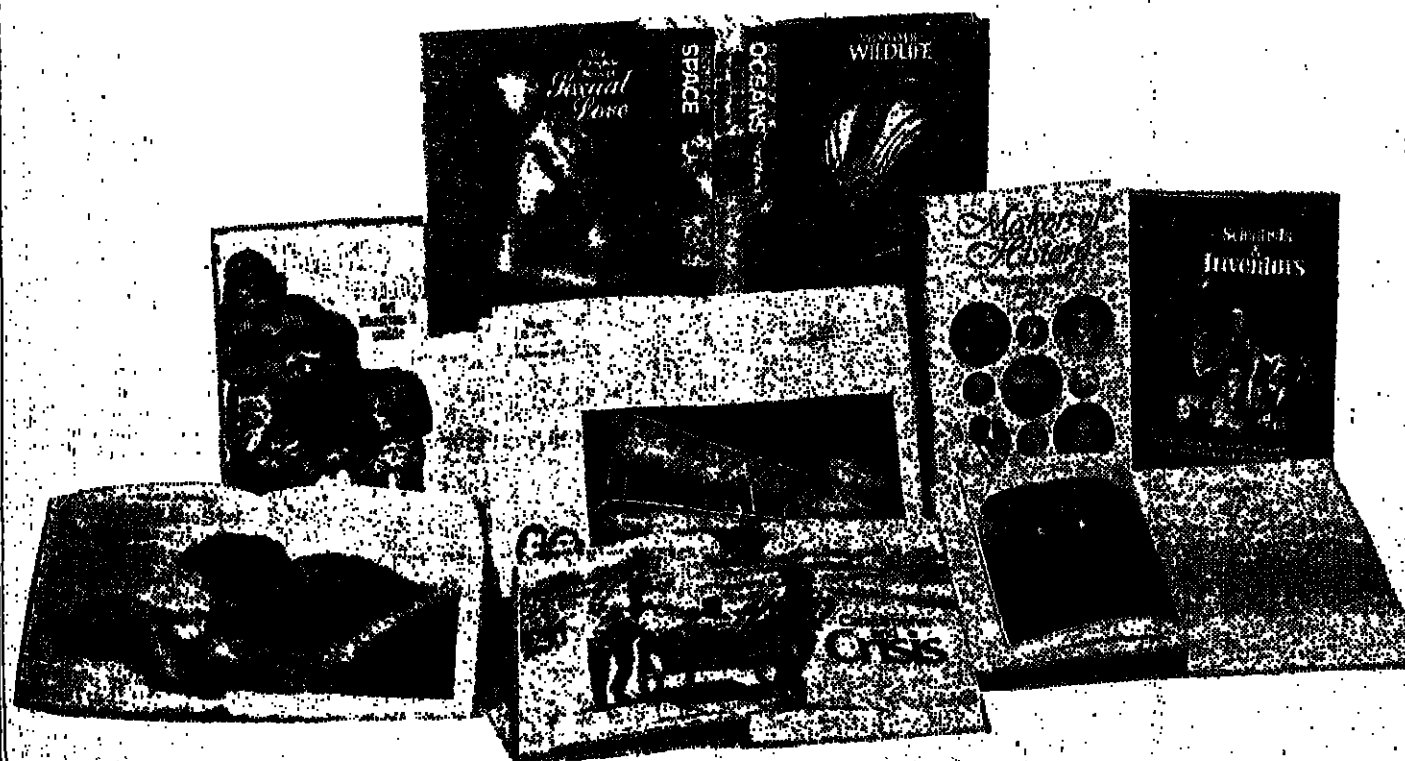
Barbin's case is too uncommon for him to illuminate more than a small portion of the history of the relations of the sexes in the past. He shows, in a negative way, how difficult it was to look at the question with any kind of detachment, how curious about it was, frightening, how powerful were the forces favouring the strictest conformity. One day, no doubt, historians will get round to studying peculiarities of this kind in the wider context of physical abnormality. The handicapped deserve to have their history written, and not just in terms of the laws passed to assist them. They constituted a very sizeable class—probably about one third of the population in nineteenth-century France. The attitudes and experiences of the lurchbacked and the club-footed, the squint-eyed, the stutterers, the toothless, the sufferers from hernia, rickets and skin diseases, at all social levels, would repay study. It is possible that they would emerge as much more the oppressed and stigmatized section of the community than the working class, who, after all, had ways of defending itself.

The domination of the cult of normality may have been as severe as that of the cult of social advancement and making good. The elimination of much disease and improved medicine have greatly reduced the proportion of handicapped people, but at the same time intellectual and psychological divergence from "normality" has probably increased. Perhaps normality will ultimately and paradoxically become a rare phenomenon, as deeper study reveals the uniqueness of the individual. Barbin's story is a contribution to this combination of problems, and Michel Foucault has done well to exhume it from its obscure retreat in medical history. It will be interesting to see how he interprets it in the forthcoming book he promises.



"The Wedding": a characteristically vital woodcut illustration by Félix Vallotton for *Gatherings: Psychologies of the Street* (1896), a collection of avant-garde stories. Vallotton is best known for his woodcuts of Parisian life and personalities of the 1890s; he was a friend of Toulouse-Lautrec and the Post-Impressionists, whose style and subject-matter he adapted to his own graphic technique, with stark contrasts between black and white and boldly outlined contours. From Vallotton, Graphics by Ashley St James (96pp. Ash and Grant, £5.95; paperback, £2.95).

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## Carved in granite

By Charles Causley

JOHN HARRIS:  
Songs from the Earth  
Selected Poems of John Harris,  
Cornish Miner, 1820-1894  
Edited by D. M. Thomas  
130pp. Padstow: Lodeneck Press.  
£2.75 (paperback, £1.20).

Until the appearance of D. M. Thomas's excellent Cornish anthology *The Granite Kingdom* (1970), the best work of the under-poor John Harris was little enough known in his native county, let alone beyond the Tamar. For almost a century, much of Harris's finest poetry has lain buried beneath the great weight of his excruciatingly plebeian and didactic Victorian verse-sermonizing. Mr Thomas, also born in mid-Cornwall and a poet acutely sensible of the whole ambience and central strengths of the earlier writer's work, has set himself the formidable task of selection and (in the case of some of the longer pieces) substantial excision. The result is *Songs from the Earth*, a total triumph, and a complete vindication of Mr Thomas's assertion, in his first anthology, that the important fact about John Harris is "not that nine-tenths or more of what he wrote is moribund doggerel, but that when all the rubble is taken away there remains the radium of poetry".

John Harris was at work by the age of nine, and at thirteen had begun a twenty-year stint underground in the huge Delcoush Mine. The semi-romanticism of his vision in such poems as "The Mine" always carries the chillingly realistic tones and colours of truth. Most ever seen a mine? Most ever been down in its fabled grottoes, well'd And canopied with torrid mineral belts,

That blaze within the fiery orifice?  
Hast ever, by the glimmer of the lamp,  
Or the fast-waning taper, gone down,  
Towards the earth's dread centre,  
Where wise men  
Have told us that the earthquake is  
conceived....  
Hast ever heard, within this prison-house,  
The startling hoof of Fear?

Despite fearfully long hours of labour, unabated poverty, the most cramping of personal horizons, Harris remained a determined and compulsive writer. If paper was unavailable, he wrote on roof-slates, iron wedges, the inside of his miner's hat, his thumbnail. In the absence of ink, he manufactured his own from blackberry juice. His formal education was negligible, but the springs of his creative imagination rose pure and strong. The nearby "crag-heap'd Carn Breu" was to him a glittering and fabled mountain: Carmel or Sinai itself, and the setting of perhaps his finest poem.

Summer was past, and in the leafless wood  
Autumn lay down to die. Deep mourning tones  
Arose from Nature, and the sky wept tears  
Upon the sounding earth.  
Walk'd robed in silver, and the white rocks look'd  
Like sailors assembled on the hills of heaven.

"A Story of Carn Breu" is the homely tale of an old widow visited by two nameless and prophetic horsemen seeking shelter from a great rainstorm as they return from a funeral. Their strange stories—of those who have lived, worked, suffered and died in the hills' shadows—are crowned in the final passage by the disturbing image of a huge and rapacious sea-bird pecking at the scalp of a drowned fisherman. So great is the poet's skill, however, that such gloomy horrors are kept firmly in control within the framework of a serene and confident vision of a

savage world tamed and made bearable by a realization of the ultimate harmony of man, nature, and God. In a whole series of shorter poems—whether dealing with scenes of childhood, the wild life of his Cornish countryside, or the grinding drama of the life of the poor—Harris captures, with marvellous economy, the explosive charge contained in the sudden moment of revelation.

The grey-headed man, clad in rags  
told us too much and too little. Too much, because they give us snapshots of their parents, wives, children, mistresses, and pets; unless the focusing is sharp and the composition formally pleasing or witty, these may invoke the tedium as well as the charm of a family album. Too little, because the pictures, if they are not boring, invite us to ask some probably illegitimate biographical questions; such as, is it really true what the poet says about his affairs? And his income? For example, John Uppike visits Hartford, Connecticut, which is said to have the highest per capita income in the United States, and looks at the opulent houses of Mark Twain and Wallace Stevens; he reflects that no authors today possess such residences, "And I, I live (as if you care) in chambers/That number two—in one I sleep, alone/ Most nights, and in the other drudge... Well, I do care, in a way, enough to ask if this famous novelist, who once had his face on the cover of *Time* in really as good as all that. Should we do something about it? The only suggestion I have to make is that the causes of this poverty, if it is real, are private education for several children plus amateur photography. "Commencement, Pingree School," tells how the poet goes to see "this lovely daughter graduate". As each of the girl graduates "accepts her scroll of rhetoric/Up pops a Daddy with a Nikon. Click." A Nikon is a very classy camera, and even film is dear on top of school fees.

Uppike, who once illustrated an autobiographical poem with real black-and-white snapshots, is at his best in family reminiscences. "Leaving Church Early" is a restatement of his novel about his family in Pennsylvania in the 1940s (*Of the Farm*) but no less poignant for that. His recent experiences are more melancholy than those of the childhood (true of nearly all the poems). The particularly sad poem is the one that ought to be happy: being driven, very fast, from Milan to Como by a beautiful Italian lady; sailing in a large yacht; flying over the Atlantic extend backwards and forwards, interestingly but on the whole unhappily. The one subject he is happy about is, one supposes, sex, but the long poem with the unprintable title is more ingenious than euphoric.

## Family snapshots

By Matthew Hodgart

JOHN UPPIKE:  
Tossing and Turning  
Poems  
90pp. André Deutsch. £3.50.

The trouble about poets is that they tell us too much and too little. Too much, because they give us snapshots of their parents, wives, children, mistresses, and pets; unless the focusing is sharp and the composition formally pleasing or witty, these may invoke the tedium as well as the charm of a family album. Too little, because the pictures, if they are not boring, invite us to ask some probably illegitimate biographical questions; such as, is it really true what the poet says about his affairs? And his income? For example, John Uppike visits Hartford, Connecticut, which is said to have the highest per capita income in the United States, and looks at the opulent houses of Mark Twain and Wallace Stevens; he reflects that no authors today possess such residences, "And I, I live (as if you care) in chambers/That number two—in one I sleep, alone/ Most nights, and in the other drudge... Well, I do care, in a way, enough to ask if this famous novelist, who once had his face on the cover of *Time* in really as good as all that. Should we do something about it? The only suggestion I have to make is that the causes of this poverty, if it is real, are private education for several children plus amateur photography. "Commencement, Pingree School," tells how the poet goes to see "this lovely daughter graduate". As each of the girl graduates "accepts her scroll of rhetoric/Up pops a Daddy with a Nikon. Click." A Nikon is a very classy camera, and even film is dear on top of school fees.

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Uppike remains a master, perhaps the master in our time, of light verse. Whether he is a poet or not will not be decided until twenty years after his death, but as posterity has decided that Dylan Thomas is a poet and other well-thought-of candidates of the 1950s have vanished beyond the River Lethe. This cannot matter to him, since he must remain in the company of Chesterbelloc and Auden, a good man and better father. He is even a literate writer, if we define literacy as the willingness to read through the *Scientific American* every month without necessarily understanding every word. "Skepy developments," about pulps, etc. is good, but even better is "News from the Underworld," They haven't found the W wee particle for carrying the so-called "weak force" yet, but can bet they'll find some other thing.

In the strange world of poetry (still largely unknown) Uppike may be a weak force, but he nevertheless has in him something of the stars.

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## LITERATURE

## Criticism under capitalism

By Bernard Bergonzi

JOHN FEKETE:  
The Critical Twilight  
Explorations in the Ideology of  
the American Literary Theory  
from Eliot to McLuhan  
New York: Routledge. £7.95.

The title of John Fekete's book is a play on a novel; the subtitle is a play on a critical theory. Both aspects are characteristic of the book. It is a work of Marxist materialism, and the argument is in places, as the subtitle suggests, a strong case for a Marxist literary theory. The author, who is only thirty-two, is a Canadian academic who was born in Hungary and who keeps up his literary connections. Lukács is a major influence, particularly Lukács's late writings on aesthetics. The other major influence is Marxist literary theory, particularly the work of Raymond Williams. Fekete's argument is that the notion of the novel as an ideal balance of order and diversity was not invented by Richards in the 1920s, as Mr Fekete tends to imply, but was memorably formulated by Coleridge in *Biographia Literaria*.

All the same, his chapter "Foundations of Modern Critical Theory" is full of sharp and provocative insights, and ought to be read by anyone studying the way in which twentieth-century criticism developed from Huile, Eliot and Richards. One of his most interesting suggestions is that "practical criticism" as devised by Richards, and still a central pedagogic activity after nearly fifty years, was analogous to the practice of the novel.

division between "culture" and "civilization"; the realms of literature and art and the imagination were increasingly opposed to capitalism and industrial society. Then, in the twentieth century, literary criticism became institutionalized and was incorporated into neo-capitalist civilization.

For Mr Fekete the essence of art is that it should defamiliarize a world alienated by capitalism, imparting a subversive vision of things as they really are, pointing to the possibility and then the actuality of a transformed human future. It is in this aspect of Mr Fekete's thought that the influence of Marcuse is most apparent; and it is the optimistic Marcuse of *Eros and Civilization* rather than the pessimistic author of *One-Dimensional Man*. Instead of art as defamiliarization (reminiscent of the Russian Formalists' "defamiliarization") the academically institutionalized literary criticism of the twentieth century emphasized ideas of order, of balance and integration. These are ideas which Mr Fekete cannot accept, as he believes that in a capitalist society order is inevitably repressive and dominating. He is somewhat lacking in historical perspective here, since the notion of the poem as an ideal balance of order and diversity was not invented by Richards in the 1920s, as Mr Fekete tends to imply, but was memorably formulated by Coleridge in *Biographia Literaria*.

After his discussion of Eliot and Richards, Mr Fekete moves back across the Atlantic, to the disappointment of the British reader, who would have hoped for something on Empson and Leavis. But Empson is not mentioned at all, and Leavis only fleetingly. Mr Fekete's story is henceforth concerned with the second act of the drama, projected mode of literature as a vast integrated system, to be accepted in its entirety, in value-free terms. The parallel with modern "one-dimensional" society was evident, and not surprisingly Fry became a guru of the academics. Mr Fekete suggests that the crisis in the institutionalized study of literature, *The Critical Twilight* is likely to be one of those irritating books that one cannot really believe but certainly should not ignore.

of anthropological functionalists, such as Malinowski; studying the "protocols" was, for Richards, a form of fieldwork. Mr Fekete suggests that Richards's model of the mind is in effect a model of society; the emphasis on balance and reconciliation in the literary text is parallel to the ideal of a highly integrated mass society, and both are ideological in the capitalist interest. And so, too, in a further parallel, is the shift in social theory from conflict models to functionalist models.

It is worth noting that Mr Fekete evades awkward questions about cause and effect (still more about base and superstructure) by presenting analogies and homologies, not causalities. Not for nothing, it is implied, does this phenomenon arise at the same time as that; here we have the characteristic tendency of Marxist criticism to resemble a form of highly systematized paranoia; everything has a reason and an explanation, nothing is arbitrary and inexplicable, to suggest otherwise is to lapse into ideologically based mystification. Mr Fekete is both very sure of himself and strangely persuasive; reading him I found myself giving a provisional assent to much of what he was saying, despite my unbelief in Marxist doctrine; one accepts his arguments at the time much as one "accepts" the reality of class and situations in a good novel. As I said, he has written a metacritical fiction, and a compelling one. Only after putting down the book do doubts and scepticism return.

After his discussion of Eliot and Richards, Mr Fekete moves back across the Atlantic, to the disappointment of the British reader, who would have hoped for something on Empson and Leavis. But Empson is not mentioned at all, and Leavis only fleetingly. Mr Fekete's story is henceforth concerned with the second act of the drama, projected mode of literature as a vast integrated system, to be accepted in its entirety, in value-free terms. The parallel with modern "one-dimensional" society was evident, and not surprisingly Fry became a guru of the academics. Mr Fekete suggests that the crisis in the institutionalized study of literature, *The Critical Twilight* is likely to be one of those irritating books that one cannot really believe but certainly should not ignore.

Ransom, Frye and McLuhan. The problem is that all three now seem to have been very influential in their time, who came from regional peripheries to the American educational and cultural establishment where their influence was strongest. A Southerner, John Crowe Ransom, and two Canadians, Northrop Frye and Marshall McLuhan. Ransom began as a Southern Agrarian, attacking capitalism and mass society in a reactionary but radical way, taking his stand on the mythical idea of a pre-capitalist model of South. Then, as the propagandist for the New Criticism (though not its inventor), he came to terms with existing American civilization, hoping that the practice of criticism in the academics would lead to change and improvement by educational rather than political means. Mr Fekete finds a typical homology here: the New Criticism taught literary order and integration just when Roosevelt's New Deal and large-scale corporate capitalism were spreading similar ideals in society. Ransom began with what Mr Fekete calls "defensive reaction" against capitalist society, then accepted its institutions.

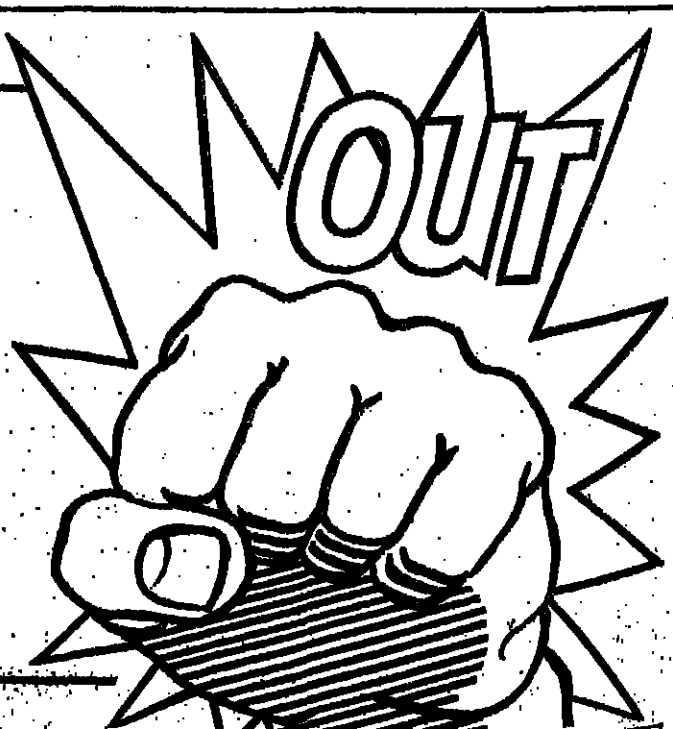
Leaving such flourishes aside, Mr Fekete is more plausible when he analyzes the limitations of our contemporary culture. In doing so, he uses concepts such as "alienation" and "reflexion" and "fetishism" that seem to me validated in experience, and which do not at all depend on other Marxist assumptions, like the class struggle and historical determinism. Perhaps, after all, Mr Fekete is not quite Marxist enough; even now some hard-nosed ideologue may be denouncing him as a left-Hegelian. For the rest of us, particularly if we are concerned with the looming crisis in the institutionalized study of literature, *The Critical Twilight* is likely to be one of those irritating books that one cannot really believe but certainly should not ignore.

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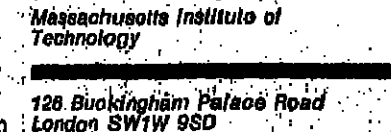
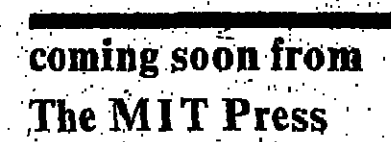
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## JONATHAN CAPE

## Follow that car

The *Driver* (ABC release, London and Southern England) is a film about a virtuoso which exhibits a good deal of virtuosity itself. Its hero is meant to be the best getaway driver in the business, and his skills are illustrated in the most technically accomplished car chases ever filmed. The film almost, but not quite, puts as high a valuation on its own hero as it does on its own expert achievement in these sequences. Walter Hill's only previous feature, *The Streetfighter*, did unreservedly celebrate the skills of its hero, who was a hard-boiled prizefighter. It was a nasty idealization of a nasty activity. In this case not even filmed convincingly—Charles Bronson never looked as if he were boxing. In Hill's new film Ryan O'Neal, as the driver, is also rather implausibly good with his fists. He is even better with cars—and these he treats pugilistically, sometimes duffing them up with successive collisions, sometimes knocking them out in head-on chicken-runs.

However, fighting with cars, unlike fist-fighting, entails a major risk of death or at least, if your opponent is the police, of punishment. In *The Driver*, Walter Hill has considerably deepened and complicated his figure of the solitary, inscrutable, invincible urban combatant with traits that recall the self-destructive hero of Karel Reisz's *The Gambler* (a title that could be one of Hill's). There is much play with imagery of gambling and games in *The Driver*, most conspicuously in the utterances of the detective—well-acted by Bruce Dern. The detective, by representing their antagonism as a game, provokes the driver—hitherto an impeccably efficient criminal—into ill-judged and almost fatal risks.

As with Reisz's gambler, the wit to lose emerges as the explanation of the hero's success in winning. The driver's superior nerve in the chicken-runs, his indifference to the huge pay-offs he earns, his disdainful treatment of other criminals, all seem to flow from the fact that in crime he is seeking or at least courting self-destruction. It must be said, however, that Hill fails to press home this account of his hero, and eventually concedes him an accidental triumph over the detective. Certain audiences will be pleased by this scene, but the film would have been more interesting if the driver had lost the contest with the detective—or perhaps won a hollow victory like James Cann's in *The Gambler*.

The second sort of virtuosity in *The Driver* is the stunning wit with which it links with a number of other recent films. Future historians of the cinema will be bound to notice the revived fashion for special effects in the film-making of the past ten years or so. Special effects are never absent, only relatively successful. Success in this area is a matter of surpassing predecessors (Kubrick's 2001 is currently being promoted on the strength of the idea that it was not excelled by *Star Wars*). Among the experts of the new sophistia, in special effects Steven Spielberg is the leading figure. His films not only go one better on shocks and UFOs than their predecessors, they also cleverly exploit the device of surpassing themselves. *The Driver* is a virtuoso in this respect. Moreover, the climactic outdoor opening by a geometrical

that was Proust's, and though he has not a trace of the Frenchman's manner of his profoundity—to say nothing of his long-windedness—there are here and there echoes of a similar spirit. A curious book this must be. It will be thought, well, curious as it is, but of fine quality. And if the lovers of sports and literature are attracted by these comparisons or feel that it is not likely to be a work after their heart, they may be assured that there are a couple of scenes from the hunting field, one from the racetrack, and one from the cricket ground which we judge not to have been deterred by anything of their

rain—by the gap in scale between the attendant UFOs and the sudden screen-filling sight of the mother-ship in *Close Encounters*, or between the shark's fin and its whole leaping body—again abruptly filling the screen—in *Jaws*.

The effects in *The Driver* set off in an early, spectacular start on the Spielberg principle. Within minutes a chase following a robbery at a casino (the first appearance of the gambling motif) is under way. Squads of police-cars looking like Spielberg's small UFOs hurtle through the night with flashing lights. But there is no subsequent stepping-up of the spectacle. All that the last chase adds to the first are a few viscerally upsetting through-the-windscreen shots. It is so happens that the driver is doing the chase in this instance, but both sequences follow the same pattern of pursuit, cornering, and final chicken-run.

Hill himself, in interview, has claimed that *The Driver* descends from "film noir" of the 1940s. It certainly depends visually on darkness. The exterior shots are mostly at night, or in long but unimpressive spars, such as warehouses and multi-storey car-parks. An apartment is said to have a good view of the city—and all we see is a few twinkling lights through a black picture-window. But *The Driver*'s main indebtedness is evidently to films of its own time—not just to *The Gambler* and Spielberg, but to very obvious forebears such as *Bullitt*.

Michael Mason

## The pursuit of Peter Pan

In a piquant contrast, George Douglas Brown's *The House with the Green Shutters* that when it was published in 1901, showed village life in a very different light, it too made its way with the public. Perhaps the idealizing solace of the kailyarders had, in many readers, merely been replaced by the new excitement of melodramatic violence; perhaps realism was as far away as ever. Violence, after all, is a form of romance. But there seems little doubt that Brown himself, a man even more enigmatic than Barrie, was inclined to the view that small communities, far from being organic heavens of mutual aid, were peculiar breeding grounds of what he called "virulent malignancy". The fall of the House of Gourey in his tragic novel is owed not only to the fatal pride of the bullying central character, but also to the machinations of the sly, gloating, garrulous villagers.

The relentless pursuit of his characters—and there are very few with whom it is possible to sympathize—suggests that Brown might have been taking something out on life itself. And here, oddly enough, there is an undercurrent of cruelty, of something sinister, which links Brown not only with Barrie, but



Thomas Rowlandson contending with Welsh weather—a detail from "The Artist travelling in Wales", an aquatint self-portrait, first published in 1799 and reproduced in Art in Wales: 2000-1850, edited by Eric Rowan (127pp. University of Wales Press, £8.95, paperback £4.95), the first volume of a two-part history.

It says something for the power of George Douglas Brown's *The House with the Green Shutters* that when it was published in 1901, showed village life in a very different light, it too made its way with the public. Perhaps the idealizing solace of the kailyarders had, in many readers, merely been replaced by the new excitement of melodramatic violence; perhaps realism was as far away as ever. Violence, after all, is a form of romance. But there seems little doubt that Brown himself, a man even more enigmatic than Barrie, was inclined to the view that small communities, far from being organic heavens of mutual aid, were peculiar breeding grounds of what he called "virulent malignancy". The fall of the House of Gourey in his tragic novel is owed not only to the fatal pride of the bullying central character, but also to the machinations of the sly, gloating, garrulous villagers.

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GARY WILLS: Inventing America Jefferson's Declaration of Independence 280pp. Doubleday. \$10.

Gary Wills has managed to say both and worthwhile things about Thomas Jefferson's draft of the Declaration of Independence. This is a surprising achievement. The materials on Jefferson before 1776 are scanty; born in 1743, he was too young to have amassed a large archive, and most of his papers and notes were destroyed by fire in 1770. And while it is obviously proud of his part in the Declaration, his comments appeared to warn investigators that there was not much to investigate. The arguments in the Declaration, he said, merely embodied the common sense of the American mind.

As we might expect, scholarship on this theme has tended to assume that whatever can be settled here is settled by Carl Becker's *Declaration of Independence* (1922); and that other problems must remain conjectural, for want of evidence, but are of minor consequence. So, to the query of what Jefferson read before 1776, the usual reply is that he absorbed the tenets and tenets which commended themselves to "the American mind". What of the differences between his draft and the version approved by Congress? Wills authoritatively cautions that the various alterations are all conjectures, but that actually agreed the text.

As to the minor, unresolvable matters, historians have for example wondered now and then why Congress had a young man of thirty compose the draft when the task could have been performed by some older and more experienced man. John Adams of Massachusetts, by way of old Benjamin Franklin. (Possible explanations: because Jefferson was from Virginia, a colony prominent in the movement toward independence; or because he had already taken a bold step in his *Summary View of the Rights of British America* 1774; or, according to Adams, because he was a prolific writer whom nobody was as disliking.) Again, why did Jefferson's draft of rights stipulate "liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" instead of the more traditional "life, liberty, and property"? (Differing hypotheses: Jefferson had a radical inclination to deplore of private property; approval of happiness sounded better; or he appealed to him as a family formula used by Locke, David Hume and

lead of Caroline Robbins, has allotted far less importance than Carl Becker did to Locke as the prime source of American constitutionalism. Biographers have duly noted the tribute Jefferson paid to William and Mary College. Wills however follows his own line. He agrees in minimizing Locke's significance as a political and social theorist—indeed believes that Jefferson may never have studied Locke's *Two Treatises of Government*. But he does not support Bailyn in replacing Locke with the Common Law, or Independent tradition of men like Trenchard and Gordon. For him the vital influences upon Jefferson, probably shaped by Small (a philosopher educated in Aberdeen) were those of the Scottish Enlightenment: Francis Hutcheson, especially, but also Hume, Adam Ferguson, Thomas Reid, Lord Kames and Adam Smith.

True, Jefferson was later to speak of Locke, together with Bacon and Newton, as perhaps the three greatest men who ever lived; and he was to voice his detestation of Hume's conservatism. But Wills is concerned with the Jefferson of the 1770s, and with the exact contemporary meanings of Enlightenment vocabulary. In this interpretation, Jefferson was thinking of Locke as a psychologist, the author of the *Essay on Human Understanding*; and the earlier Hume was for him one of the exponents of "moral sense" philosophy.

Wills's thesis is persuasively, indeed brilliantly stated. It rests upon a close reading of the Scottish school, and of continental philosophers, scientists and jurists, including Beccaria and Burlamaqui, who expressed comparable ideas and some of which were indeed adopted by Hutcheson and other of his countrymen. Their theories were certainly known in America, through publication and the teachings of the numerous learned Scots who migrated to the colonies.

In such a reconstruction, Jefferson is more sharply defined, more credible and more convincing than ever before. We now have a comprehensive picture of his intellect; convinced of mankind's propensity to benevolence and to prearranged order; and the test of government, should be the ability to increase the sum of happiness; that heartfelt emotions may be finer than the calculations of the head; but that sensibility and rational calculation should ideally go together, for instance in the mathematics of felicity and misery. Twenty years later, in order to reinforce his theory that "the earth belongs to the living," Wills admits too that Congress was right to cut and tone down the portion of Jefferson's Declaration draft blaming George III for the transatlantic slave trade. The argument was weak in history, logic and morality, and better glossed over (vide Samuel Johnson: "How is it that we hear the loudest yelps for liberty from the drivers of Negroes?").

Given Wills's premises, though, Jefferson comes out as an understated and impressive, contented and sensible and rationalist. He produces an ingenious defence of Jefferson's views on Negro inferiority, mainly as expounded in the *Notes on Virginia* (written 1781-82). Jefferson's "race" is a "deficient" in "nature", and their inferiority in matters of the "mind" might be attributed to their manifest social disadvantages. Wills is at pains to show the influence of Locke's *Two Treatises* because he sees their implication in Jefferson's individualistic, with that of a moral-sense philosophy upon collective happiness. Turning to the Declaration, he finds a key importance in the longest deletion by Congress—the one which thinks labor, or amusement, are not at the time and much later in his *Autobiography*, to distinguish his own version of the Declaration from that for which Congress opted.

Here the contention is that Jefferson took seriously the proposition that while the final version of the Declaration accuses George III of "transporting large armies of foreign mercenaries," some copies of Jefferson's draft speak of "Scotch and foreign mercenaries." This looks nasty if Jefferson was so deeply beholden to the Scottish Enlightenment. However, the "Scotch and" may have been tacked on to his draft by others, and he could arguably have let it stand for the full record.

Yet if these are quibbles, they are indicative of difficulties created by the Wills approach. What exactly, for instance, is being claimed on behalf of the Jefferson of 1776? Clearly not that he was merely an exemplar of "the American mind." If he had not in some degree gone against the American grain, there would be no point in stressing the difference between his notions and those of the majority in Congress. According to Wills, Locke's *Treatises* had caused to engage the attention of thoughtful Americans. This is debatable. They are listed in a well-known letter of 1771 to Robert Skipwith as a desirable item in a gentleman's library (along with several Scottish authors but not Hutcheson), and Thomas Wills's edition was reprinted in Boston 1773. Suppose though that Wills is correct about Locke, and about the greater importance of the Scottish school. Is this to say that Jefferson was exceptional among Americans in what he deduced from Hutcheson et al? We may agree that he was an exceptionally studious and intelligent American. Wills gives a penetrating account of Jefferson as a type of the Enlightenment, complete with the special quirks that form the individual signature of each person within a type. He is described as a "great artist" and such warmth is understandable. But there is no reason to think that his contemporaries in the Virginia House of Burgesses or in the Continental Congress regarded Jefferson as a genius, or even as someone with idiosyncratic opinions. Like many of them he was a lawyer—a side that Wills passes over lightly.

If Jefferson had died during the Revolution, would we or should we devote much attention to him? Though his mind was far from commonplace, he drew his ideas from others. Wills wishes us to judge Jefferson in the light of the 1770s. That is a sensible intention, which yields dividends. However, it presents us with the problem of Jefferson's status in 1776, mid of the status of the Declaration, on which Wills himself is in places wittily dismissive. The mindset of young Jefferson is fascinating, but not awe-inspiring. Wills would wish us to bow down in worship. A praiseworthy decent respect for the historical context brings him near to saying that the Declaration was a propaganda document, and that Jefferson, the lawyer-politician fully reared that fact.

Sure enough when we examine the various versions of the Declaration of Independence, and set them against Jefferson's recent previous involvement in drafting the *Summary View*, the Declaration of the Causes, and "Necessity for Taking Up Arms" (1775), and the *Virginia Constitution* (June 1776), we are in a different world from that of the philosopher-scientist. It is a world of urgent clamour, of arguments weighed for expediency as well as for logic, of ideas changed, of paragraphs lifted from other manifestos. Jefferson's own draft of the Declaration of Independence is of this nature. He may have cherished the material that was ultimately omitted, but in part because he had already framed and polished it. As a whole his draft reads peculiarly. Despite Wills's subtle contentions, most of the draft does indeed the king, and Parliament, and the first complaint against the "unfeeling brethren" does seem cobbled on.

This is not to repudiate Wills, but rather to suggest that he may have put together two books in one (as indeed his title and subtitle reveal). Each is in itself delightful to read. One is almost an exercise in debunking, however, that under the surface of the Declaration lies a Virginia intellectual of the 1770s.

Oxford University Press 1978

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# To the Editor

## Authors and Unions

Sir—Many of your readers will condemn Hugh Thomas's attempt (September 29) to continue the debate on the forthcoming unionization of the Society of Authors, since the correspondence has so far yielded little of value. Freddie Raphael's high-sounding positions are overweighing strong.

Professor Thomas, for instance, says that a writer is not an employee, and should look upon his publisher as the employer—presumably as an employer might regard a writer of his capability. The author/publisher relationship is much more complex than such crude terms can suggest. I certainly am not an employee of Jonathan Cape Ltd; yet all that activity in Bedford Square, all those clever people and machines working at work, all those representatives storming the nation's bookshops—are they my employees? Of course not. I am only one man at the end of a phone, working on my own as the urge takes me, and less than Cape to me. I have my individualism; they have my royalties.

Which is why authors in general are much at a disadvantage in dealing with publishers, although relationships between a given author and his publisher may be excellent. Authors can be, and frequently are, exploited. If it were not so, there would have been no need for the Society of Authors in the first place.

The 1970s have imposed many additional strains on the profession of authorship, VAT not least among them. Writers need assistance and moral support more than ever after the failure of P.L.R., not the writers who have survived, maybe, but younger writers on whom the future also depends. They may not enjoy Professor Thomas's advantage in deriving support from institutions; possibly they have to survive a more traditional routine of solitude, one room, and fewer meals a day. Those of us who can improve the situation should try to do so, and unionization looks like a promising way. The shades of Shakespeare and Johnson will surely nod approval.

Perhaps such hope—and a trust in British writers—is naive. Better that than a disabling dread of change. Many of the letters you have published, etc., express fears of a left-wing take-over, and of the stifling of freedom of expression. It would be terrible if such fears realized, yet then we should indeed deserve more letters than we have taken over by those who can still

act. There is little to fear if we are prepared to defend and build on what we have. This is a call to writers to be more alert. Resignation is not a fruitful posture. May I set to rights the personal slur in Professor Thomas's letter? The Society of Authors did not send me to visit the Soviet Society of Authors, whatever that might be. They have sent me no further east than Strasbourg, to the Council of Europe. I visited the USSR last year (before taking up my chairmanship) as a cultural totem, one of a team of five British writers travelling under the auspices of the Arts Council and the G.B./USSR Association. My views of political matters are set forth in my current novel, *Enemies of the System*. It is beyond farce to suggest that the Society is seeking links with Moscow.

BRIAN W. ALDISS,  
11 Charlbury Road, Oxford OX2 6UT.

## Sarah Gertrude Millin

Sir—Nadine Gordimer's review of Martin Rubin's biography of Sarah Gertrude Millin (September 15) repeats Professor Rubin's suggestion that it was in answer to Mrs Millin's hysterical charges of antisemitism that T. S. Eliot altered "Jew" to "Jew" in reprints of his poem "Burbank with a Baedeker"; Blenheim with a Cigar. This is nonsense. The change was made by the printer, I think when Eliot's *Collected Poems* had to be reset, and neither Eliot nor Sarah Millin had anything to do with it. Eliot of course accepted the change. It should perhaps be added that Professor Rubin's account of the break between Eliot and Mrs Millin—that it took place in London—is correct and the account given by T. S. Matthews in his book *Great Ties* (that Mrs Millin turned Eliot out of her house in Johannesburg) is incorrect.

It is not to Sarah Millin's credit that she entertained Eliot, and received his charges of antisemitism without apparently having read his poems; it looks like non-hunting of the baser sort, even though Eliot was a director of a firm that published many of her books. But while it is correct to say that Eliot indeed made fun of her, it is not to think either Martin Rubin's book or Nadine Gordimer's review is altogether fair. This is regrettable, as there is unlikely to be another book about her.

It seems that the change that came over Sarah Millin in the last twelve years or so of her life had coloured the consideration of her whole personality and even the estimation of her books. Her hus-

band Philip, a Judge of the High Court of South Africa, kept her on the rails; after his death in 1952 she very soon went wildly off them and became not only an uncritical supporter of the policy of apartheid but also a propagator of some unjustifiable views of black people generally (though she was for a time an ardent supporter of Tolstoy). She lost nearly all her English friends as a result and her letters to them became an embarrassment. But this was not the Sarah Millin they had known for many years previously. She had been generous and amusing; she was "a mother" who enjoyed the company of prominent people because she knew her own worth, not for reasons of social climbing. Professor Rubin seems to suggest that her desire to see her books widely known and read was some how unworthy, but I have never known an author who felt otherwise. Many of her books were written at the request of publishers (Faber and Faber proposed to her the biography of Snodgrass after the success of her study of Rhodes).

It would be possible to say more but this letter would become too long. To conclude: I notice that Ezekiel Mphahlele, summing up his pages on Sarah Gertrude Millin in *The African Image* and explaining that his severely critical view of her work is intended to identify with the underdog in her stories, adds: "Because of this, I may appear to be unduly hard on Mrs Millin." I take this in its context to be a generous and even sympathetic statement. Both Martin Rubin and Nadine Gordimer seem to me to have been "unduly hard" and with less justification.

PETER W. SAUTY,  
Aldeburgh, Suffolk.

## Lettuces

Sir—I find it slightly comic that sixty years after the appearance of the first structuralist publications and thirty-seven years after the death of St James Fraser, there should still be eminent classicists who suppose that contradictions in myth (which form its very essence) need to be explained away as "meaning relief" in a traditional story. What does Robert Parker (Letters, October 6) make of the fact that the mother of Christ was a virgin and that the Magi brought aphrodisiac gifts of frankincense and myrrh to the Nativity?

The structuralist opponents are likewise full of contradictions. While Parker confirms that the amphiprotic powers of lettuces were everyday knowledge in classical Athens, Jack Lindsay, with his earlier reference to Engelhard, *My Lettuce* (September 15), seemed to claim that, at an earlier period elsewhere, lettuces

were not amphiprotic at all. The latter proposition has no relevance for Lindsay's book but it might be interesting to have Lindsay's comments on the obscene story in Chester Benney Papyrus I (another irreverent joke about the gods) where the aggressively masculine Seth becomes pregnant (1, 6, effeminate) as a result of eating lettuce. But of course I agree that "this column is hardly the place."

EDMUND LEACH,  
King's College, Cambridge.

## The Spanish Civil War

Sir—Burnett Bolloten, in his letter (August 25) concerning my review of his book *La Revolución española*, challenges me to name which of his sources, in my opinion, "cannot be dissociated from the Cold War", and then self-righteously asserts that in his book he has "presented the facts without manipulation or omission".

Among Bolloten's sources that I consider suspect are Orlov's writings, and the "confessions" of various Spanish communists published during the Cold War, especially those connected with the propaganda outlets of the associations for "Freedom of Culture". Above all, I distrust the book attributed to Valentín González ("El Campesino"), originally published in 1950 in French, *La Vie et la mort en URSS* (1959-1949). This book was "translated" from French into Spanish by Gorkin. But then in which language had "El Campesino" written or dictated his book? Moreover, in the English and German editions of this book, the "introduction" signed originally by Gorkin forms a part of the text supposedly written by "El Campesino". This evident manipulation of the text of a book should have caused Bolloten to use it with caution; instead, he cites it frequently, and, along with the testimony of Krivitsky and Orlov, it forms the backbone of his anti-Negro argument concerning the shipment of Spanish gold to Moscow in 1936.

There is only one authoritative study of the Spanish gold problem, that by Angel Vinas. Although Bolloten includes Vinas's 1976 book in his bibliography, he commits the unpardonable fault of not citing it in his argument. The reason, doubtless, that Vinas ignores "El Campesino" completely, and con-

cerning Krivitsky and Orlov writes that their accounts are of "insufficiently debatable". Of Orlov's testimony before the United States Senate commission concerning the Spanish gold Vinas writes: "La credibilidad de tal testimonio no parece dudosa en puntos interesantes para nuestro trabajo."

Mr Bolloten's book is not, as he claims, either a "vast expansion" or an "updating" of his original work. The meaning of the word "vast" according to my dictionary, is: "Of some great extent or degree, so that the senses cannot appreciate it all at once." Mr Bolloten has added around a hundred pages in sixteen years. I doubt that there are among TLS readers many minds that would hoggle at this herculean effort. This would be updating, if chosen. The bibliography for the book (dated 1977 in the author's preface) contains only seven works for the period 1974-76. Nor does the bibliography of Vinas's 1976 book in connection with Vinas's 1976 book *R. de la guerra civil española* (1970), in which the treacherous portrayals of Casado with Franco's agents are related, through documents localized though imperfectly identified. But Bolloten's account of Casado's treachery ignores without explanation this book found in his bibliography. The same method is used in Vinas's work—see how Bolloten uses in his "updating" two other works on the Casado incident (both contrary to his thesis) published before 1977.

Another flagrant case of omission can be found in his account of the May 1937 events in Barcelona, in which he fails to mention the message of German ambassador Faupel, sent from Salamanca on May 11, 1937, in which Faupel recounts the information received from General Franco and reconfirmed by Nicolás Franco, to wit, that the Barcelona troubles were provoked by Moscow agents. This document can be found in Mr Bolloten's bibliography. It may be that Franco was oversteering his case, but why does Mr Bolloten conceal the very existence of the message?

HERBERT R. SOUTHWORTH,  
Roche, Concomiers, 35300 La Blanc (Indre), France.

## Lillie Langtry

Sir—Is Richard Osborne sure (Commentary, September 29) that Somerset Maugham saw Lillie Langtry dancing with gigolos in a Chicago dance-hall during the First World War and that she danced with a gigolo in the *Prisoner of Zenda*? There are probably as many millions of female libration as there are men or women associated with the phrase, and Lillie not only means different things to different people, it means different things to the same person at different moments. I know of, for instance, that I sometimes use it to describe a condition of mind, and at other times, with a more, use it mockingly, or, as you say, to describe a woman who had had the world at her feet paying a man half a dollar to dance with her filled me with shame.

FREDERIC RAPIHAEL,  
Lagarde, St Laurent-la-Vallée,  
24170 Belvez, France.

Eva Bezzoli's *The Minister's Naughty Grandchildren*, which was reviewed in *Children's Books* in the TLS of September 29, is published by Bodley Head and not Hamish Hamilton as stated. We apologise for any inconvenience that this error may have caused.

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# The liberated heroine

By Diana Trilling

It is my intention to discuss a liberally present presence on the contemporary literary scene, someone I call the "liberated heroine". It is not difficult to find a general meaning for the liberated heroine. She is a fictional creature whose first concern is the exploration and realization of female selfhood; this investigation of selfhood is to be independent of society as a whole and to be a function of the relation of the sexes. The liberated heroine's pursuit of selfhood tends to be overt and even programmatic but it is not necessary that this should be. Usually she is the spokeswoman for a female author but this too is not necessary.

Although I speak of the liberated heroine as a relatively new figure in literature, it is important to realize that she is not a sudden creation in our culture. She has been in preparation for some time past ten to fifteen years and has been in preparation for a long time. The whole literary and social history. As a matter of fact so large a part of what I am about to say is addressed to the heroine as a historical figure that it would perhaps be better to call her the "Evolution of the Liberated Heroine". In this would have been misleading, so because it would have implied a closer historical study than is possible within the time limits of our disposal.

A general definition of what is meant by a liberated heroine is, as I say, not very difficult to settle. It is when one tries to be more precise about the two words "liberated" and "heroine" that the situation becomes complex, and the very concept of the heroine is ambiguous since it is not clear what we believe we are talking about. It is an old story, the heroine's movement in literature when white middle-class women in the movement were seeking the need for women to be as free as the male, while there were black women who were seeking liberation from the white man's world to stay home and take care of their own families instead of going for white people's houses and children. As I had occasion to remark in another context, discussed by Norman Mailer's *The Prisoner of Zenda*, there are probably as many millions of female libration as there are men or women associated with the phrase, and Lillie not only means different things to different people, it means different things to the same person at different moments. I know of, for instance, that I sometimes use it to describe a condition of mind, and at other times, with a more, use it mockingly, or, as you say, to describe a woman who had had the world at her feet paying a man half a dollar to dance with her filled me with shame.

The notion of this condition of mind, and at other times, with a more, use it mockingly, or, as you say, to describe a woman who had had the world at her feet paying a man half a dollar to dance with her filled me with shame.

Most of the women who have come down to us in literature have been resourceful or at least competent, courageous, able to make up their minds, able to sustain suffering and deprivation, and their personal needs to the detriment of others. Overall, they are a variety, it is seldom demonstrated in action, or not in freely elected action. Heroines are in the first instance women who please and help and wait. They please and help and wait for their underlings. They wait for their men to

our feelings about her heroine-ism. In a sense, the heroine is a creature of the past. There is Antigone; there is a heroine or a clinical study, an obsessive depressive if there is such a psychiatric diagnosis? There is the scene, you will recall, where her sister Ismene asks Antigone, "Am I outside your fate?" to which Antigone replies, "Yes. For you chose to live when I chose death." This is not how a heroine thinks; it is very chilling and heretics are not supposed to chill. Because of her resistance to give up Antigone is undoubtedly attractive to a modern audience; but she took her stand against authority on her brother's behalf, not her own; by present-day standards she was too little possessed by self to be redeemed for heroine-ism by her psychopathology and suicide.

By and large we are agreed on what a hero is: he is strong, noble of purpose, noble of bearing. We remember the film critic Robert Warshaw's famous essay about Westerns and his definition: a hero is someone who looks like a hero. We are indeed enough in accord about what a hero is to know what is meant by his opposite, the heroine, or by the character who refuses even the negative purposefulness of the anti-hero: the non-hero or un-hero whose appearance in a present-day novel validates it as a serious work of the fictional imagination, and even of the political imagination. It is the heroine who poses the questions. Was Lysistrata a heroine? Or Shakespeare's Voltemus, mother of Coriolanus? What about Emma Bovary or Emma Woodhouse? Is Natasha in *War and Peace* a heroine? Is Anna Karenina a heroine? George Eliot's Maggie Tulliver? George Eliot's Dorothea Brooke? Henry James's Isabel Archer? Edith Wharton's Lily Bart? Virginia Woolf's Mrs Ramsay? One can go on. It suggests an amusing game but I propose the questions for a serious reason, to dramatize, if I can, the degree to which our response to the heroine, unlike our response to the hero, is subjective, involved with our feelings of personal affection and identification. For in some measure all the women I have named were heroines on the simple, not so simple—ground that they tried to make a destiny, they wished not to be the inert recipients of their fate. Not one of them acquiesced in the history of her heroine; the heroine would seem to be an endlessly reiterated story of failure. In fact, it is their failure to achieve the destinies they deserve or seek that makes most heroines of literature precious to us. It is with us, as it was with the women I have named, that the promise of her youth becomes most poignant for us. It is when we close the book on Emma Woodhouse's marriage that we let ourselves be fully aware of the pleasure we take in the energies that will probably no longer be exercised: the wise Mr Knightley will curb them as unsuited to a wife, attractive as they found them before marriage. This is not how it is with heroes. They are not dependent on our affection; they love her as one loves the true heroine of one's imagination? Of heroes we do not ask such a question: it does not apply. Heroes need not be loved either by their mothers or by us. They stand free and clear in external reality like the sculptures which so regularly memorialize their counterparts in life. Literary heroes may not always choose their destinies; the gods, the state, the nation, and the church choose them. They intrude upon their fate—but they are not merely acted upon by fate. They act.

Most of the women who have come down to us in literature have been resourceful or at least competent, courageous, able to make up their minds, able to sustain suffering and deprivation, and their personal needs to the detriment of others. Overall, they are a variety, it is seldom demonstrated in action, or not in freely elected action. Heroines are in the first instance women who please and help and wait. They please and help and wait for their underlings. They wait for their men to

turn from war, from crusades, from dangerous ways of earning a living, from missions in distant lands. Heroism ranges the world. Heroine-ism, as full as that of men, having been so eloquently urged upon them, women now have even more need of men than they had before, and ingenious creatures that they are, they begin to contrive ways in which to make their bed partners better than a match for their own sexual upsurges and powers. It is no longer in war that men are invited to measure their heroic capacities but in lovemaking—certainly it is a kamikaze enterprise in which men engage when they take on the sexual mission assigned them by an Erica Jong or a Gael Greene.

But if women's need to please men is the constant over the centuries, the form in which literature has presented us with the image of desirable femininity is, as I have indicated, anything but static or unitary. Viewed historically or even within a single cultural period, the heroine is an exceedingly protean phenomenon. To the heroine of fortitude and endurance, literature has opposed the heroine of adorable femininity; to the heroine of dependability; to the heroine of impetuosity; to the heroine of sublimity, the earthy mother; to the heroine of submissiveness, the heroine of spirit. Related to the fictional heroine, the fictional hero is a monument to the stability of civilization. His is the virtually monolithic presence past whom society parades its variously desirable ladies.

Among heroines undoubtedly the most influential in the evolution of our present-day liberated woman has been the heroine of spirit. She is also the most treacherous of projections of a desirable female

image for it is the heroine of spirit who has for so long led women into being deceived that their possibilities in life are bigger than they usually turn out to be and confirmed men in the not wholly mistaken belief that high spirit exists in a woman only to seduce them and then exploit. The history of the spirited heroine is a vast and marvellous study; I speak of it here only most inadequately, to call attention to the cruel disparity there has always been in literature—as in life—between female promise and female fulfillment. From Aristophanes to George Bernard Shaw the defeat of female spirit has given comedy some of its most bracing material and, in tragedy, underscored the idea that for something to be worth destroying it must be of special value to begin with. Obviously heroes too, and not only spirited heroines, are undone in stories and plays but there are discernible differences between how they suffer defeat. The defeated hero in literature always remains a commanding figure, deserving of our regard. Hector is a hero even in the humiliation that Achilles inflicts upon him in death. The defeated heroine is the object of our pity or of our Jovian ridicule. In being brought down, she is put in her place; it is a familiar place. Again, a hero is defeated not because he is heroic but despite it. Hector may be an invulnerable invulnerable but it is only a possible attribute of the heroic disposition, it is not identical with heroism. Female spirit in itself is the offence, often so extreme as to be punishable by death. I have been able to think of only one novel, *Wuthering Heights*, in which the death of a spirited heroine is her only conceivable consummation within the terms of the story. Much more typically the heroine of spirit is killed to placate society; society issues the decree, the novelist is her executioner. Of Emma Bovary, Flaubert gave us the empathic reassurance, "Madame Bovary, c'est moi"; but was her death actually the only possible one in the situation? Could she not have been allowed to find

Except for his early Nick Adams stories, which have their roots in James Fenimore Cooper and the literature of the frontier, Hemingway's best work is set against the background of war. Heroic action has always been associated with war, which has excluded women. Of the many social changes that have contributed to the disappearance of the hero from the literature of recent decades, and his replacement with the non- or un-hero, our present advanced literary culture, probably the most crucial are the closing of the frontier and the growth of anti-war sentiment. And these are central as well as the development of our fiction of female liberation. For if there are no new worlds to conquer and no battles in which to prove bravery and manliness, then bravery and manliness forfeit some of their value, as it were, and come to be more like each other. Perhaps nowhere is the prophetic genius of Dostoevsky's *Notes from Underground* better revealed than in its description of the man of action as a "linked creature" with the "unlinked creature" of the woman. It is one of the most striking of our modern myths that the underground man makes between traits that were once thought to be particular to each sex. There is a passage to pause over in a recent novel, *Kinflicks*, by Lisa Alther, in which the female protagonist phones her hippie lover and is told by his father that the young man has just been hospitalized as a paranoid schizophrenic. We are not surprised because we have already seen him looking across the world on his belly, vomiting. The speaker tells us that "every cell in her body called out in requiem (for him), her heroic non-warrior". On one level of meaning this un-hero is clearly a political statement, a protest against the military and governmental authority. But he is not that alone; he is also a statement against all masculine assertion as this has been traditionally understood. The un-hero nevertheless has his un-heroic mate.

And indeed, this is one of the startling revelations of our current fiction of liberation, that behind the refusal of women's dominance subjugation to male dominance there is the same old pattern of female compliance. This is how it always was in history: if men wanted their women strong, women were strong; if men wanted their women weak, women were weak. The rules which for a long time governed female sexual deportment; but the fundamental accommodation to male preference, or to male desire, has been the same. It is what is assumed to be male, precisely what is assumed to be female, that is the contradiction except in the case of female compliance and the closer approximation to each other

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## The rephrasing of Life

By Idris Parry

ROBERT WALSER:  
Das Gesamtwerk  
Volumen 1-12  
Edited by Jochen Greven  
Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, DM125 the set.

KATHARINA KERR (Editor):  
Über Robert Walser  
Volume 1: 217pp. DM 6.  
Volume 2: 487pp. DM 8.  
Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.  
ROBERT WALSER:  
Lektüre für Minuten  
221pp. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp. DM10.

To mark the centenary of Robert Walser's birth, Suhrkamp have issued a limp-cover *Werkausgabe* of the complete works, edited like the Kosodo edition of 1966-75, by Jochen Greven. It is in fact the Kosodo edition slightly rearranged with newly-discovered pieces added and the editor's most useful postscripts and notes extended. This is a fine work of scholarship.

To this new edition Suhrkamp have added the two-volume of Robert Walser, a collection of published opinions by various hands, from the earliest reviews to the slow stream of later critical essays, and, in the second volume, the most extensive bibliography yet. These two books make for remarkably easy access to most of what has been written about Walser. Suhrkamp reissued in 1976 the most informative book about Walser—Robert Mächler's documentary biography, a model for authors on how to tell the tale and not get in the way—and the whole publishing enterprise must please and surprise Walser admirers: he has not yet found enough readers to make pub-

lishing him a profitable venture. General Stumm in *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* put his finger on Walser's trouble when he said that in Germany an author has to have a large number of like-minded readers before he can be accepted as having an unusual mind. There is no reason that this conclusion should be limited to the German reading public.

About half of the material in these twelve volumes of the *Gesamtwerk* failed to find a publisher in Walser's lifetime. It is not surprising. What is surprising is that so much was published. He could never have become a celebrity. This is something he would have done with evidence of a commonplace mind. "Ich kann nur in den unteren Regionen atmen" is a phrase he puts in the mouth of his Jakob von Gunten, but the only source of his fiction is his own experience and opinions, and such a phrase comes naturally from the man who once said to Hofmannsthal at a party: "Kommen Sie nicht ein wenig vergessen, beiläufig zu sein?"

If Walser now attracts more attention, it may be because the suspicion of modern attitudes which runs through his work is becoming more credible. This suspicion comes from the belief that the passion for analysis which is characteristic of our strongly intellectual civilization must distort any vision of life. The inclination to shrink experience into the frame of human thought is, he believes, an attitude which distorts both vision and observer and leads to a perversion of life. "Der Lebensmensch geht den Menschengeschlechtern verloren mit all dem Abhandeln und Erfassen und Wissen." The irony of growing academic appraisal would not be lost on Walser. In the mask of Jakob he attacks the whole process of thinking: "ich verachte in Grunde gesonnen mein ganzes Denkvermögen."

Walser repeats in his own terms the message from the Book of Genesis that man will surely die if he eats of the tree of knowledge

of good and evil. "Gott geht mit den Gedankenlosen", says Walser, denying the life of submission and the subsequent impulse which is a creative act because it is unthought and born of direct response to living forces. In this condition there can be no conscious selection. Where there is no selection, everything is important beyond moral evaluation. It is here, more than in any superficial resemblance of style, that Walser connects with Kafka, who could tell Milena that he understood the fall of man better than anything else and whose work is an infinitely varied declaration that the expulsion from paradise is a continuing and present event. Musil was perceptive in 1914 when he reviewed Walser's *Geschichten* and Kafka's first book, *Betrachtung*, in the same manner. He wrote of the impression made by Kafka's

book as "wie ein Spezialfall des Typus Walser".

Most of Walser's pieces are short, sometimes little more than impressions or sketches. The subject-matter seems trivial—as one might expect from an author who said: "Im Alltäglichen ruhen die Wahrheiten". These characteristics may account to some extent for the general underestimation of his work. He appears to be disjointed and, even in his three short novels, episodic. But this is how life appears to anyone without the illusion of continuity. The brevity of Walser's "fragments" reflects an attitude to life.

It is a personal view uncommitted to continuous structures of thought, so we get a proliferation of thoughts and find that the structure of his literature is itself auto-

biography. "Für mich sind die Skizzen", he wrote in 1929, "die ich dann und wann hervorbringe, kleiner oder umfangreicher, Romankapitel, Der Roman, voran, bleibt immer derselbe und schreibe, ein mangelhaftes zerschnittenes, oder zertrümmtes Ich-Buch, das nicht werden können."

That was written some time after Kafka told Felice Bauer (when she seemed jealous of his work on his first novel): "Der Roman bin ich, meine Geschichte sind ich." The relationship between life and work is as obvious and as devout in Walser as in Kafka. It is devout because for both writers the business of writing is not to describe life (that this is possible is a fallacy induced by thought) but to rephrase it.

To introduce Walser's work, Suhrkamp offer a selection of sentences and short paragraphs from his writings, *Lektüre für Minuten*, which may tempt the thoughtful to suspend thought.

## Asking questions

By Rex Last

ERICH FRIED:  
100 Poems Without a Country  
Translated by Stuart Hood  
158pp. John Calder, £4.95.

For many years now, Erich Fried has been living in London (having fled to England just before the outbreak of the Second World War with his mother—his father had died as a result of injuries sustained at the hands of the Gestapo), working away at the succession of intractable ideological and military issues that have beset the world—the Nazi war, Israel, Vietnam, Chile and Baader-Meinhof inter alia—which scarcely seem the stuff of which lyric poetry is made.

Inevitably, his concern with such issues has been construed as tanta-

mount to complicity with the unacceptable face of political extremism, but Fried is far from being yet another trendy Marxist intellectual preaching predictable doctrine, as this representative collection (favoured the International Publishers' Prize in 1977) amply demonstrates.

Stuart Hood's sensitive translation accurately captures Fried's style, his incisive, constant questioning, and his refusal to shy away from any issue, however unpleasant (Fried the Jew is most severe in his censuring of Israeli aggression). He even grasps the subtle of urban terrorism and tries to comprehend the mindless destructivity of people like Ulrike Meinhof.

She was driven to political madness by the political normal and their norms. Fried is fascinated by the riddles

of political life and constantly employs such paradoxical formulations—on occasion, one is tempted to think, almost for their own sake, as when he comments on the French infantrymen in 1917 blessing in protest at being driven there and again into the pointless slaughter of battle.

By blasting they cease to be a herd of sheep.

A genuine craftsman of words, Fried often experiments with surrealism and concrete poetry (even venturing as far as the poem *trouvé*) in his largely successful endeavours to create a non-confessional lyric poetry which is Brechtian both in its intensity and its agonistic (for all the political convictions they both espouse). Marred only by an irritating scattering of misprints, this collection constitutes an apposite introduction to the English-speaking reader of an important contemporary German poet.

## The novelist as sinner

By Cecil Jenkins

FRANÇOIS MAURIAC:  
Oeuvres romanesques et théâtrales complètes  
Volume 1  
Edited by Jacques Petit  
xiii + 1415pp. Paris: Gallimard 1976.

Literary immortality in France these days—unless it supervenes from the north in the shape of Nobel Prizes—tends to take two forms. The more directly instructional of these is obviously membership of the French Academy, which gives you tenure, a green suit, and the status of belonging to a very exclusive club. However, you do not have such distinguished uncles as Bernanos, a Malraux, a Sartre, and it is perhaps fair to say that the open secret which gives some human plausibility to the immortals is the knowledge that, in the main, they are not immortal. In this situation, the presence of a writer's work in Gallimard's prestigious Bibliothèque de la Pléiade has come to be seen as a more telling index to the enduring quality of his achievement.

Mauriac's career as a man of letters in the French manner was successful that he once described as "one long prize-giving". He was elected to the Académie in 1951, a rather early translation which he jokingly ascribed to the inclusion of the *Immortals*, given his very serious illness of the previous year that they "could grab me while I was still alive—but not so long." In 1952 he was asked by the award of the Nobel Prize, which he sought to justify by committing himself to the anti-communist cause in his journalistic *Revue*. Already in the following year, however, he was noting wryly that only honour had so far and was every into the Pléiade side. Twenty-five years later, and

eight years after his death, the omission has now been repaired.

Nevertheless, it would not seem that Mauriac's entry into this literary galaxy has created much interest or enthusiasm in France. Apart from a routine review in *Le Monde* and a very non-committal brief notice in *La Croix*—contrasting sharply with his biting attacks of fifty years ago—the only apparent comment of note came in a full-page article in *L'Express* at the beginning of May, damagingly entitled "Sarcophage de luxe pour Mauriac". For its author, Angelo Rinaldi, the world of Mauriac's novels is a social curiosity from a bygone age, presenting sexual and other problems which, to the extent that they might still exist, can now be solved by a chat with a psychologist—"reimbursed through Social Security".

Nor does he see any redeeming quality in Mauriac's style, which in his view never got beyond the soft *écriture* of his early master, Barrès. Rinaldi also argues, after Sartre, that Mauriac's tendency to wrap up his characters in external comment prevents them from defining themselves either through their language or through their actions—and thus from impacting as achieved beings with their own reality and mystery. If he feels that the enduring Mauriac is the diarist and the political journalist—increasingly, it would seem, the received opinion—this would in fact amount to an appendix those minor pieces which Mauriac, whether through oversight or because he regarded them as juvenilia, excluded from that collection. This first volume therefore contains not only the familiar novels and short stories published between 1913 and 1926, together with Mauriac's corresponding prefaces from the *Oeuvres Complètes*, but six additional texts, of which five—including his *Mauriac avant Mauriac*, published last year—originally appeared in various reviews.

These early pieces are of considerable interest in so far as they show the young Mauriac, torn between provincial purity and

Parisian sophistication as in the wartime fragment *Le Retour* on the "Jansenist" of the "Catholic novel" itself, which of course came into being at the point at which France was ceasing to be a Catholic society, has probably completed its often troubled minority course as a self-consciously separate activity.

Again, the honour which Mauriac, like Bernanos, drew from his audience for his courageous break with the dominant attitude of his church in relation to Franco or Vichy, or from his opposition to the colonial policy of the Christian Democrats under the Fourth Republic, has now faded into the past. All this, of course, must happen to any writer. The point is rather that any enduring historicity of the work, itself finally dependent upon artistic coherence, must now be found not on the surface but in the depth and consistency of Mauriac's created world. And at this level it is rather harder to make guesses than Rinaldi's article might suggest.

The present volume of this Pléiade edition, itself totalling some 1,500 pages, is in fact the first of three—the intention being to bring together the novels, short stories, plays, and such relevant theoretical writings as *Le Roman* and *Le Romanier et ses personnages*. While M. Petit takes as his term of reference the twelve-volume Fayard *Oeuvres Complètes* (1950-55)—the text of which he has frequently had to correct—he also includes in an appendix those minor pieces which Mauriac, whether through oversight or because he regarded them as juvenilia, excluded from that collection. This first volume therefore contains not only the familiar novels and short stories published between 1913 and 1926, together with Mauriac's corresponding prefaces from the *Oeuvres Complètes*, but six additional texts, of which five—including his *Mauriac avant Mauriac*, published last year—originally appeared in various reviews.

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The editorial apparatus with which M. Petit has endowed this volume is a formidable one. To a richly illustrated preface introducing Mauriac's work as a whole, he adds a very full chronology and a useful appendix on the geographical setting of the novels. In addition, for each of the eighteen texts represented, he provides an introductory study, notes on historical, literary and personal references, an account of the various stages of the manuscript, and any early drafts and variants likely to be of critical interest. It is thus possible to observe Mauriac at work: his hesitations, his false starts, his stylistic choices. It is of particular interest

to be able to follow in detail his habitual practice of starting off in the first person in order to become his "business" and "going"—before moving into third-person narration as the character is established within the developing relativity of the fictional situation. It is in this way that the self-declared "instinctive writer" loves himself in his projection—and that *Le Noûd de vipères*, exceptionally, should have been narrated in the first person is indicative of the rigid self-control under which that very personal, if not always successfully charitable *mea culpa* was performed.

If the current climate in France may not be propitious to a high evaluation of Mauriac, does the editor's eighty-page preface provide a perspective within which, in the medium term, his writings may properly be approached? In an important respect, through its central emphasis on the structure of relationships in Mauriac's world, I think that it does. It is only with reluctance that M. Petit turns to the questions of the "Catholic novelist" and the "regional novelist", arguing that a preoccupation with these external references has often falsified the reading of the work. He tends to treat religion as an element in the fictional situation, whether it be a cloak for the dominating Pharisee or a refuge, and he stresses that the provincial setting is less a function of social observation than of the re-creation of an imaginary autobiography tied to childhood and the decisive relationship with the mother—herself symbolically fused with the earth itself.

Peritently, M. Petit suggests that all the characters, in the end, derive from this central relationship between the Mother and the Son—the Mother being refracted through a series of Phœdre-like figures and other surrogates, and the Son through the constant dialectical opposition of the ugly duckling and his apparent counterpart, the seducer, who in the later novels may be seen in terms of the "dark thirsts" of homosexuality or as possessed by the devil. It is indeed from the paralysis caused by this central, blocking relationship that

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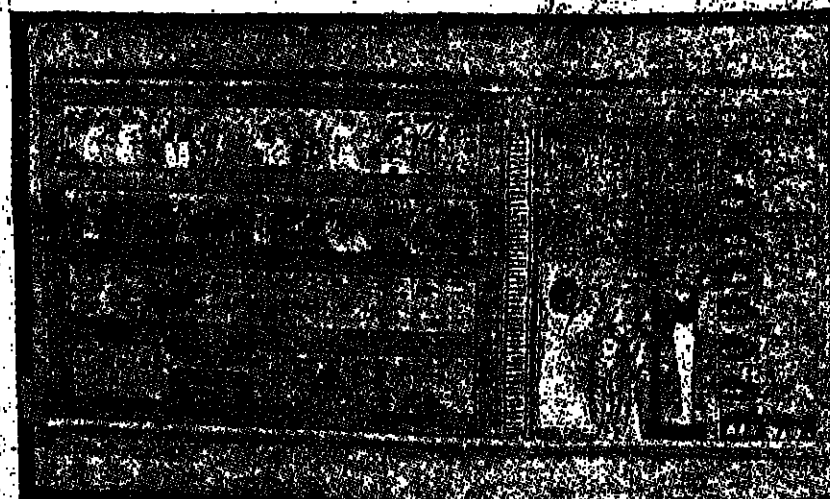
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the specific contradictions and tensions of the work ultimately emerge: the spiritually real sinner and the spiritually dead Pharisee with the clean slate; the drive towards freedom, but the fear of freedom; the obsessive thirst for sexual experience, but the concomitant horror which symbolically equates love-making with killing. It is a valuable service to Mauriac to have brought out in this preface the solitary suffering, the unshared solitude, the insupportable human entanglement and emotional impossibilities—in short, the imaginative integrity of the world of this writer at his best.

Unfortunately, M. Petit's global, thematic approach does not enable him to convey the varying depth of Mauriac's own personal involvement in his fiction at the quite distinct stages of his career. He is thus left somewhat bereft when he attempts to deal with the criticism of Mauriac's own personal involvement in his fiction at the quite distinct stages of his career. He is thus left somewhat bereft when he attempts to deal with the criticism of Mauriac's own personal involvement in his fiction at the quite distinct stages of his career.

*La Fin de la nuit* of 1935 and other novels, and Mauriac in retrospect granted that the criticisms of Mauriac—whose starting-point had been that the Christian writer starts at an advantage in fiction—were just.

However, the *Thérèse* of *La Fin de la nuit* is something of a curious contrivance as compared with the original—in a profound sense, Mauriac himself—of *Thérèse Desqueroix*. The vibrant world of the early cycle of novels from *Genitrix* onwards is a far cry from that of the over-controlled novels of the middle and late 1930s and, indeed, from the and sourness of the plays and some of the last novels. The almost desperate personal involvement which leads Mauriac to merge with his characters, gives not only human urgency but high aesthetic resonance to such works as *Le Désert de l'Amour* and *Thérèse Desqueroix*. If Mauriac is to survive, it will perhaps be less as the distant or political Saint-Simon of the Fourth Republic—though that may well be an aspect of the "figure"—than in these novels where in intense symbolic projection the "insensitive writer" even against his own salvation at the price of the moral terms of the 1920s, was in some sense fighting his life.

In *The Romantic Prison* (241pp, Princeton University Press, £8) Victor Bromberg examines the use of the prison image in nineteenth and twentieth-century literature. The French version was reviewed in the TLS of September 17, 1976.

## The dodecasyllabic hero

By Malcolm Bowie

JACQUES ROUBAUD:  
La Vieillesse d'Alexandre  
Essai sur quelques échos récents du vers français  
215pp. Paris: Maspero.

What loss enervated destiny could there be for a dead hero than to become not a god but a poetic metre, and to find as his faithful a tribe of syllable-counting pedants? This is what happened to Alexander in France. Towards the end of the twentieth century the collaborative verse-narrative known as the *Roman d'Alexandre* launched a new poetic line, having twelve syllables with caesura after the sixth, upon a proud, century-long career. This line, the alexandrine, is the metre of metres in France. Whenever a French poet chooses a longer or shorter line the alexandrine is being refused. But refusal as one may, the alexandrine still presides accusingly during the act of composition.

Jacques Roubaud, who is one of the most brilliant and surprising of the younger poets now writing in French, points out at the start of his book that the very success and longevity of the alexandrine have made its story seem dull. For 700

years it flourished, and was undamaged by its short-term fallings from favour or by the tiny audacities to which its rules occasionally fell victim. But about 1870, in a sudden pre-emptive attack, Rimbaud, Lautréamont and the surrealists unseated the alexandrine and drove it to its last refuge in the tender hearts of antiquarians and academicians. The battle was short and metrical freedom victorious in all the high places of poetic imagination. This has remained the official story, if for no better reason than that it seems roughly to fit the facts and that neither metrists nor literary critics have been interested in acquiring enough of the other party's expertise to re-mount the siege closely. Roubaud is a perfect candidate for the job of rewriting the later biography of the alexandrine: he is a metrist who can count with his fingers as well as with his fingers, and he reads poems by an improbable array of predecessors and contemporaries; he writes poems; he enjoys paradoxes.

Roubaud's story, which contains more events and explains more problems than the story it replaces, hinges upon those late nineteenth-century innovations which brought into being the "standard" free verse which still dominates French poetry. What really happened in those years was that the alexandrine went underground and survived. Contrary to opinion both critical and popular, the free-verse line is a tightly re-bound affair and bears the clear marks of an earlier system of restrictions. In all the things it must not do (be rhymed, be of uniform length with its neighbours, contain twelve syllables with caesura after the sixth) it reveals itself as a self-conscious anti-alexandrine. While in all the things it must do it is the alexandrine's loyal successor: it must be a rhythmic and a typographical unit; its last full syllable must be more prominent than, or at least as prominent as, the one before; if a syntactic group begins inside a line, it may be completed only at the end of a subsequent line. These negative and positive injunctions were so unanimously respected by the early practitioners of free-verse including Mallarmé, Cendrars, the Dadaists and the Surrealists—that they quickly became a new paradigm.

The younger writers whose work Roubaud discusses in his final chapters are fighting an all-too-familiar battle. When Denis Roche, for example, writes: "Comme un papier prend l'eau que les parents s'ont", he is scrupulously violating the rules of standard free-verse, violating at once the alexandrine and thereby drawing attention yet again to the very notion of metricality which the alexandrine had held under its impenetrable, god-like shield. Although other metrical systems are possible, and vigorous experimental work has been done in some quarters, the continuing reign of free-verse is more likely to be threatened by an extinction of the metrical impulse itself than by the arrival of a competitive new metre.

## Last Request

You will not really love him when he's dead,  
Though you will say you do;  
The bricks he threw at you  
Will be transformed to fragments of good bread.

All changed in your transfiguring head:  
The boot to dainty shoe,  
Bleared eyes to limpid blue,  
All clearing vocables unsaid.

The shrill complaints, the jagged tears you shed—  
Pure song, ophthalmic dew:  
The recollected few  
Hot couplings will conceal the way you bled.

You'll say how much you loved him, when he's dead  
But it will not be true.  
He asks one thing of you:  
Even this be heart before you go to bed.

Vernon Scannell

## The awkward priest of Barbiana

By John Rosselli

GIUSEPPE MILANI:  
Lettera ad una Professoressa  
Milan: Mondadori, L1,400.

GIUSEPPE MILANI (Editor):  
Lettera di Don Milani priore di Barbiana  
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parishioners. *Lettera ad una Professoressa* was a prime text of the movement known as "1968" or "la contestazione"; it had a profound effect on many young people; it has done much to change Italian education. But it addressed a specifically Italian problem—over a million young people of compulsory school age were falling each year to move on to the next form, while nearly all middle-class pupils could get through by cramming. Few things are harder to become interested in than other countries' school systems; the book was not the best introduction to Milani for the English-speaking reader.

Everything else about Milani's work calls for an understanding of modern Italy, one of the countries least adequately reported to the British public. In his most formatively years, the late 1940s and early 1950s, the Italian Church was closely identified with an anti-communist crusade and with the upholding of property rights and the traditional authority—this in a country which had not yet emerged from the vortex of rapid industrialization. As Father Giacomo Martina, a sensitive and expert Jesuit historian, acknowledges in his excellent short history of the Italian Church since 1945 (the acknowledgment is no less telling for being cautiously put: "Father" Martina, whose harsher term of condemnation is "highly debatable"), stands by tamperment at the opposite pole to Milani), the Church in those years became still more fixed in habits of authority and of political and social conservatism that went back to Pius IX; under the leadership of Pius XII it also developed a style of "triumphalism", that is, of manipulation of the masses to call forth an unthinking consent both to the dominance of the Church in society and to the dominance of the Christian Democratic Party in government. Those were years when the Italian state radio would open its news bulletin with the words "The Pope has agreed to the transfer of the Bishop of Mantua to Padua", and to the subordinate place such transient matters as the Korean War or the fate of the European Defence Community.

They were also years when industrial wages were low and trade unions weak. Milani, a young chaplain (in effect, a curate) in an industrial suburb of Prato, found that some textile firms there illegally employed boys of twelve to work a twelve-hour day (or night) and sacked five or six workers a

week, often for being communists or attempting to organize. With unemployment at a steady high level a recommendation from a parish priest could mean a job; if you're recommended him", a Prato employer told Milani, "he can't be a communist", which was clearly all the matter that he could go to work minding the sheep that make wool and lambs and cheese. And then the wool and the lambs and the cheese are sold, and Adolfo's half-share is just enough to live on, while the young gentleman's half, put together with the half-shares from other farms, is quite enough to send him to school till he's thirty-five and let him be an unpaid assistant at the university and live in libraries and laboratories where man really looks like his Creator who is all mind and all knowledge.

In the end Adolfo gets fed up and leaves; but the young gentleman finds another "idiot" who agrees to uproot his family and move in, provided the farm is electrified. The young gentleman shows him a check of paper with the latter head of the electricity company; he fails to tell the new sharecropper that three days' fumigation by the government van hasn't got the bugs out of the house. The new man moves in but the electricity doesn't—too dear, Milani concludes.

Tomorrow, when the peasants seize their pitchforks and drown in blood, along with so much evil, great values accumulated by academic families in their minds and in their professions, remember that day, not to draw unjust historical conclusions. Remember not to weep for the harm done to the Church and to science, or thought or to art through the waste of so many heads of thinkers and scientists and poets and priests.

The head of Marconi is worth not a penny more than the head of Adolfo before the only Judge we shall have to face.

It is not hard to see in the "young gentleman" Milani's vision of what he himself had been. Almost from his first experience of the industrial areas in 1947 he was "on the side of the last"—of workers and peasants—at a time when the distinction between firm and farm was clear and when a large part of official Catholicism seemed to uphold the first.

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Thirdly the climate of the time, readily led to charges of sympathy with communism. Such charges led to his banishment—helped out by the many local susceptibilities he had bruised. (Milani wrote freely in the Tuscan manner; he had a somewhat dislike of the everyday Italian pieties—saints' images in the cowshed and the like—as well as a horror of smoking, games, and television sets as aids to parish social life: in his letters draughts and ping-pong appear at times as little less than instruments of the devil.)

Yet Milani was not remotely pro-communist or even much interested in Marxism, which to him was a straightforward materialist error. He was interested in communists and the sons of communists. Thinking of the 53.3 per cent of the flock that thronged the daily life of the Church, he prayed, not "Forgive them for not being with Thee" but "Forgive us for not being with them". He told the editor of a radical Catholic journal that if it seemed to make sense to reform the exclusive goal it deserved to be called aesthetic. Wealth, not poverty, was an offence to God; social injustice was evil only "because it is a sin, that is, it offends God and delays His Kingdom". In a letter to a young communist nicknamed Pipetta he wrote that he would support him all the way to revolution; but on the day that Pipetta, if need be through violence, came to no lower hungry or thirsty he, Milani, would betray him: "On that day I shall finally be able to open my mouth again to the only cry worthy of a priest of Christ: 'Pipetta, you're in the wrong. Blessed are the poor, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven'."

Milani's chosen method was the "people's school". He must have been a born teacher. A letter of 1951 gives a vivid notion of the evening school he had started near Prato: a kind of firm, a mutual admiration society, a political party, a religious community, a masonic lodge, an apostles' feast. The youngest is fifteen or sixteen, the oldest twenty-five, most are about nineteen. They're all workers or peasants, they belong to various parties and trade unions. Some come wholly from the other shore, some from the nearest again. (Remember, we Fascists.) Some live in the grace of God, others in the grace of Satan, some serve two masters. They have little in common (they're not even all friends) but for the great progress they're making in trying to respect each other as an individual, in understanding that good and evil are not all on one side, that one

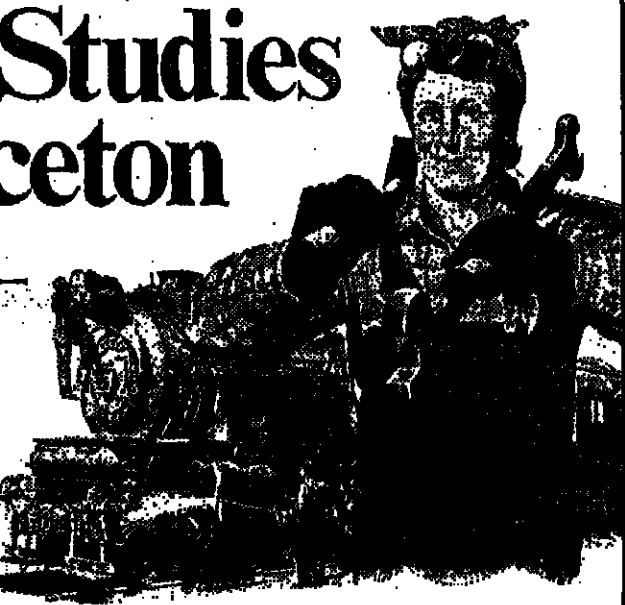
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## A New Historical Geography of England Before 1600

## A New Historical Geography of England After 1600



must never believe either com-  
munist or priest, that one must  
always go against the stream and  
quarrel with everybody.

At Barbiana there was, when  
Milan came on road, no electric-  
ity, a teacher who sometimes  
turned up (from Florence), a  
declining population of Adolfo,  
the quickly set up his own school  
for the local boys, got them to  
build a road, thundered at the local  
deputy director of education, and  
within a few years, was bringing  
children from Britain and France  
to Barbiana and sending his own  
boys—and even a girl (a murder  
thing to bring off in such a society)  
—to work for a time in London or  
Stuttgart.

He had a passion for language  
and taught it at times to the ex-  
clusion of all else; former pupils have  
regaled how mathematics lessons  
would slide into hour-long etymo-  
logical expositions. There may have  
been a throwback here to a grand-  
father who was a well-known lin-  
guist. Milan's own justification was  
that lack of verbal command stood  
as the real barrier keeping the poor  
in subjection.

At first the boys want nothing to  
do with language because they  
can't all at once see its practical  
use. But then little by little they  
taste its first joys. The word is  
the magic key that opens all  
doors. One of them notices when  
he has to deal with the highway  
code to get his driving licence.  
Another by reading between the  
lines of his party's newspaper. A  
third has plunged into the Rus-  
sian novellas and understands  
them. Every one of them has con-  
tented on the village square and  
in the bar where the doctor carries  
on a loud vainglorious discussion  
with the chemist. Every one of  
them can now grasp the values  
and the nuances of these men's  
words. Only now can they see that  
these words express a thought  
that doesn't seem worth as much  
as it did before—indeed not much  
at all. The boldest have tried to  
join in themselves. They're be-  
ginning to talk down these big  
talkers with their own words.  
When the poor man can control  
the words he uses the tyranny  
of the dialect, the political  
creator the battle will be broken.  
Like Gandhi, Milan, he greatly

admired. Milan insisted on the  
need for a "basic education" that  
would serve the practical needs of  
the poor. In *Lettera ad una Pro-  
fessoressa* he went to great lengths  
to keep out or else specifically  
explain any word an illiterate  
mountain dweller would not understand.  
This was not just a service rendered  
but a polemical demonstration of  
what in his eyes was wrong with  
Italian schooling, its rhetorical  
tradition, its dependence on boring  
uncomprehensible texts like the  
*Academi*. (Even Manzoni's *Promessi  
Sposi*, the great national novel,  
ought to be "translated".) When a  
visiting philosopher failed to make  
through a talk on existentialism, it  
must mean, Milan wrote in what  
for him was a thank-you letter,  
"either that you were not prepared  
to find a way in or that philosophy  
and existentialism are things  
neither useful nor true nor holy".

Towards the end Milan became  
yet more drastic in his denunciation  
of what he called the "Italian  
Graduated Party" which ruled the  
country under whatever govern-  
ment. (His attack ran at some  
points consciously parallel to the  
critique of a class-based, divisive  
educational system then being  
worked out in Britain.) In his last  
months he set up a "Continental  
Blockade"—no outsiders were to be  
allowed into Barbiana with an  
educational record beyond the  
school-leaving age. Such as came  
were shown over *Lettera ad una  
Professoressa* says to an  
ingenued young intellectual,  
"Pierino":

You're deformed by specialization,  
by books, by contact with people  
who are all alike. Why not come  
away? Leave your university,  
your career, your party. Start  
teaching at once—language,  
nothing else. Make way for the  
poor without making any head-  
way for yourself. Stop reading;  
disappear. It's the last mission of  
your class.

As it was Milan's.  
Like Gandhi, Milan was a reduction-  
ist. Let the world perish so truth  
(or salvation) prevail. Art, litera-  
ture, science could all go hang. The  
clouds of verbiage emitted by so  
many Italian intellectuals (left-wing  
ones included) go a long way to  
excuse him.

Milan, it will be seen, was a  
pragmatic, an awkward priest.  
He always proclaimed his own  
orthodoxy: it is now endorsed by  
two archbishops who authorized and  
prefaced Milan's book *Esperienze  
Pastorali*—withdrawn none the less  
in 1958 at the command of the Holy  
Office. He was ready to obey orders  
from his superiors if they were  
clearly and categorically expressed.  
But that was as far as his obedience  
went. His splendid letter on the  
voices of bishops—they can have an  
little direct experience of the world,  
they live behind a wall of paper  
and incense—they need pity and  
criticism more than obedience—was  
unpublished in his lifetime, but  
through no fault of Milan's. His  
letter rebuking some military chap-  
lains who had attacked conscientious  
objectors to the war (conscientious  
objection was still a crime in  
Italy) led to a celebrated court case:  
in a further letter to his judges  
Milan, by then mortally ill, took  
his stand on the injustice of  
military wars (certainly of most Italian  
wars) and on the primacy of the  
individual Christian conscience over  
the demands of the state.

The judgment of history—Father  
Manina concludes—will forgive  
Milan "his violence, his intoler-  
ance, his harsh and difficult char-  
acter, because 'he loved much'".  
Milan's archbishop, Cardinal Florit  
of Florence, in a letter reproduced  
in the Gesualdi collection, begged  
the question by accusing him of  
stirring up class war but hit home  
when he called Milan "by nature  
an absolutist".

Milan readily spoke of himself  
as an absolute monarch in his own  
school. No nonsense about children  
having opinions of their own: "you  
go to school to listen to the  
teacher". Later the young would  
take over. Meanwhile they were to  
be liberated—provided that they  
spoke with their liberator's voice.  
In this, too, Milan was a good deal  
like Gandhi. But insistence on his  
own exclusive vision was perhaps  
to be expected of a man in flight  
from a liberalist grossly dependent  
on privilege. It has been left to  
Italian society since Milan's day to  
try to carry on his fierce question-  
ing of routine and conformity  
without setting up in their place a  
new fount of all truth.

## The sentimental sort

By Filippo Donini

MARIA CARLA PAPINI:  
Sergio Corazzini  
85pp. Florence: La Nuova Italia.  
L.1,600.

Maria Carla Papini has chosen to  
examine the very fragile, some-  
times childish poems of Corazzini  
from a new angle, by considering  
them as a vehicle for some sort of  
philosophical message. She speaks  
of "the evolution of Corazzini's  
thought", and of his "existential  
investigation"; and she sees the  
influence of Nietzsche in some tri-  
vial and banal lines written by the  
poet when he was only seventeen.  
In other words she crushes one of  
the most innocent and unassuming  
of Italian poets under a terrible  
burden.

Critical talent Signora Papini  
has, as is shown by her correct and  
useful remarks on those few occa-  
sions where Corazzini's inspiration  
and language seem to anticipate  
the poetry of Montale, but else-  
where she wastes or misrepresents it.  
Nearly half her essay concentrates  
on the poems Corazzini wrote  
before the publication of *Dolcezza*,  
which appeared in newspapers of  
small cultural value. Corazzini may  
have had the reward of money for  
them, but they lack inspiration as  
he himself knew; he neglected, with  
a few exceptions, to include them  
in any of his subsequent books.

After the excessive attention she  
pays to Corazzini's early poems,  
Signora Papini dispatches in only  
five pages the two books that by  
general consensus are consid-  
ered to be his most important:  
*Piccolo libro inutile* and *Libro per  
la sera della Domenica*. She finds  
the distinctive characteristic of the  
first to be the "disqualification of  
the linguistic message, the adop-  
tion of silence and refusal of the  
word"; while in his "Desolazione  
del povero poeta sentimentale"  
Corazzini "is unable to be a poet

and does not want to be one". This  
is a serious misreading of the text,  
or rather a total failure to read  
between the lines. True, Corazzini  
calls his little book "useless", and  
says "I am not a poet", but we  
should not take those words at  
their face value. Had he really  
been persuaded that writing was  
useless, he would not have written  
at all, he would have rejected poetry  
for some more practical pursuit,  
like Rimbaud. And as for claiming  
he was not a poet, there is the evi-  
dence of Alberto Tarchiani and  
his other friends, who all agreed  
that Corazzini was quite sure he  
was a poet, but was distressed at  
not being recognized as such. His  
lament "I am not a poet" was a  
protest asking for the reader's  
denial: "but of course you are!"  
and not to understand this is not  
to understand the poetry of Cor-  
zini at all.

The cause of such a misunder-  
standing lies in Signora Papini's  
preoccupation with Corazzini's  
"thought", when what counts in  
him is feeling. His famous *Desolazione*  
is the "desolation of the  
poor sentimental poet", and if  
ever there was a poet requiring the  
critic to be very attentive to his  
emotions, it is Corazzini. But Sign-  
ora Papini does not go beyond the  
surface of his words. When she  
examines the lovely little sonnet  
"Il mio cuore" she finds that it  
establishes a "close connection  
... between writing and existing",  
which is obvious; it escapes her  
that its inspiration does not derive  
from an intellectual theory about  
existence, but, very humanly, from  
the poet's dismay at impending  
death.

The inclusion of an essay on Cor-  
zini in the collection "Il cas-  
toro" ought to be welcome, as evi-  
dence of a continuing interest in a  
poet who deserves greater popular-  
ity; but I am afraid that the present  
essay, instead of throwing light on  
Corazzini, will rather confound the  
ideas of those who already know  
him and discourage others from  
reading him in the first place.

## A voice from the asylum

By Peter Collier

ANTOINETTE ARTAUD:  
Journées Complètes  
Vols. 14: *Suppôts et supplications*  
14 volumes. 321pp, 310pp.  
Paris: Gallimard, 59fr. each volume.

Antoinette thought that he was a re-  
surrection of Christ and the owner  
of a magic wand; he treated his  
grandmothers as if they were  
living daughters; he imagined  
himself to be the focus of various  
plans to cheat him of his freedom  
and to send him to the Bastille or  
to the guillotine. He was not a  
manic, he claimed he had de-  
scribed the whole world in a  
series of occult nocturnal assaults.  
It would not be generous to  
try to attempt to rationalize his  
visions, his obsessions, and hallu-  
cinations in order to fabricate some  
coherent programme of social or  
psychological revolt. He himself  
insisted in his *Correspondance*  
with Jacques Rivière that  
his mental anguish was neither for  
sympathy, but for expression;  
a desperate search for adequate  
means of expression increased  
his anguish.

But his problem in *Suppôts et  
supplications*, which he prepared  
for publication during his  
last months at Rodez and his brief  
stay in Paris, is no less the  
problem he discussed  
at Rivière, the difficulty of  
understanding the interrelationship  
of language. The problem  
now is that Artaud does not  
know how to stop. In the sections  
called "fragmentations" and  
"dislocations", as well as in the  
longer sections, he pours forth  
a endless stream—artfully  
and intensely—of images and  
ideas, but mostly neglecting to  
pose and question his own validity  
as a mode of expression.

Certain themes eventually sur-  
face in the mind as Artaud com-  
mences his rambling monologue, or  
rather dialogue with himself. Ill-  
ness, seen as a hostile, evil force;  
torture as if it were the  
most intimate plane of existence;  
the factoring and dismantling the  
self who feels himself to be his  
own vehicle, while frenetically

desiring, like Reich, to conserve his  
sexual energy; blasphemy, as a  
saturnic need to disfigure the good,  
but also in part an exultant spiri-  
tual drive rejecting religious in-  
stitutions, steeped in a child-  
ish delight as naming the unmen-  
tionable, but developed also into a  
materialist weapon with which to  
attack idealism; social criticism,  
wildly distorted by Artaud's reac-  
tion to his confinement, but in its  
indiscriminate fury inevitably obli-  
terating some of the right targets.  
However, nothing in the treatment  
of these themes bestows on them  
any of the metaphorical insight of  
Van Gogh's *Le suicide de la société*  
or the concentrated subversiveness  
of *Pour en finir avec le jugement  
de dieu*.

In the earlier prose pieces of  
*L'Ombilic des limbes* Artaud  
shaped and focused his visions,  
despite his desire not to compro-  
mise his exemplary struggle for  
expression. In *Suppôts et supplica-  
tions* he allows his prose to pre-  
cede unstructured. The stream of  
language is only occasionally a  
stream of consciousness. Abrupt  
associations of sounds or ideas lead  
the text round hairpin bends. The  
flow of ostensibly spontaneous lan-  
guage, whose blank and punctua-  
tion were carefully corrected by  
Artaud after he had dictated it, will  
pause to allow a scream, or a series  
of nonsense syllables, to emerge.  
These glossolalia, no doubt in-  
tended to have an incantatory  
effect, also seem to indicate  
moments of pure expression, signi-  
fying the eclipse of his communi-  
cative impulse.

We should not, with the hind-  
sight now afforded by the theories  
of "anti-psychiatry" or by Artaud's  
fame, condemn the petty hin-  
drances opposed to his com-  
munications with the outside world  
from his asylum in Rodez or the  
resistance of his editors and type-  
setters to such lively inventions as  
"nolonté" and "acreté". For  
Artaud responded positively to the  
failures of his stenographer to un-  
derstand what he was dictating,  
and of his printers to decipher his  
equally original handwriting and  
vocabulary. As often as he re-  
affirmed some eccentric coinage, un-  
orthodox spelling or illogical ap-  
proach, unwittingly suppressed by his  
long-suffering dictators, he would  
use the lapse in sense—and in his  
memory—as an excuse to insert  
some even more provocative item.  
Such obstacles were clearly fuel  
for his creative dialectic, and a

reminder that Artaud's writing is  
at its most penetrating in his  
attempts to explain to Jacques  
Rivière why he was unable to  
write.

Artaud became in fact a master  
of fake spontaneity. He excluded  
from the section of *Suppôts et sup-  
plications* entitled "Lettres" some  
of the letters he actually posted,  
and includes some that he didn't;  
many of the letters that were both  
sent and published were conceived  
and revised as much for publi-  
cation as for the impact they might  
have on their recipient. They thus  
lose some of their value as an  
accurate record of Artaud's per-  
sonal relationships, but still repre-  
sent his spiritual itinerary as he  
lived out his theatrical relationship  
with the world. There are hints  
that the concrete text of letters  
exchanged with Colette Thomas  
would show an intense and moving  
spiritual rapport, in contrast to the  
majority of the letters, where his  
correspondent is little more than a  
pretext for Artaud to continue the  
shadowy projection of his fantasies.  
But here Artaud's editor is unu-  
sually reticent.

The editing of these two volumes  
is in every other respect exhaustive  
and fastidious, a monument of mis-  
directed erudition. True, it must  
have been a rewarding labour, in-  
tellectually speaking, to separate  
out the successful written and oral  
layers of Artaud's texts. But, given  
his deliberately capricious and  
insolent method of composi-  
tion, such scholarship seems redun-  
dant. The editor could have sealed  
for the most likely approximation  
to the final oral version, as cor-  
rected by Artaud, and spared the  
reader a veritable bee's dance  
among final text, dossier of pre-  
vious versions, notes and variants  
for the former, notes and variants  
for the latter. The editor appears  
to treat the achievements and para-  
phernalia of editing as ends in  
themselves, reproducing every  
slightest note and comment of  
Artaud however insignificant with  
uncritical devotion.

There is little in either part of  
this fourteen-volume of Artaud's  
complete works to excite anyone  
other than a fan or a specialist.  
There are audacious notions of  
anguish, touches of pathos, lyricism  
and anger, some corrosive prose;  
but nothing which can match the  
relentless violence of Lautréamont,  
the hallucinatory clarity of Nerval,  
or the inventive fantasy of Rim-  
baud.

## The poet's second job

By David Forgacs

EUGENIO MONTALE:  
Selected Essays  
Translated by G. Singh  
222pp. Manchester: Carcanet New  
Press, £6.50.

"I cannot understand why someone  
who is able as a critic to analyse  
people and things in good prose  
should not want to be a critic of  
the whole of life." So wrote Italo  
Svevo to the thirty-year-old Mon-  
tale, who was about to take up a  
badly-paid publishing job in Flor-  
ence and to go on writing poetry,  
rather than the novels Svevo was  
alluding to. There is indeed a novel-  
ist's manner in Montale's review  
essays. He paraphrases the plots of  
novels carefully, for example, draw-  
ing out their intricacies, he  
makes precise observations about  
the social milieu in which the writ-  
ers worked; he executes character  
sketches in a single brushstroke.  
Campania has the "will and volup-  
tuousness of a nomad, a trophy,  
Pound presents a man who has not grown,  
of a force not channelled in a  
single direction, spent on the  
surface."

Giorgio Zampa has said that  
Montale's early critical essays have  
not dated because he was never the  
prisoner of any rigorous critical  
system. Yet his independence of  
mind is not his reason for  
this consistency. The form of his  
essays—short, urbane, never too  
specialized—was also decreed by  
the medium for which they were  
written: the reviews of the 1930s

and 1940s whose prototype was *La  
voce*, and the cultural page of daily  
newspapers. These institutions con-  
tinued relatively unchanged in  
Italy until well into the 1960s and  
could presuppose audiences of mid-  
dle to high culture who required a  
blend of exposition and personal  
opinion. Montale must often have  
seen this sort of work as the poet's  
"second job", which he described  
in an article of 1959, one which  
provides, beyond a means of subsis-  
tence, a way of preserving his  
"first job" from contamination by  
the culture industry. It is not sur-  
prising, then, that the quality of  
the essays should be uneven. Some-  
times his personal moral and aes-  
thetic commitments come through  
strongly, as in the essays on Auden  
and Eliot; at other times (on  
Hardy or Defoe) we get little more  
than simple introductions for  
Italian readers.

G. Singh has translated 47 essays,  
some gravely uncollected, some  
from the 1976 volume *Sulla poesia*,  
and a few from *Auto da fé* of 1966.  
The bias, for English-speaking  
readers, towards the literary essays  
and especially those on Anglo-  
Saxon writers, is, I feel, also  
misdirected, both because they are  
uneven, as I have said, and because  
the social criticism of *Auto da fé*  
often presents a more powerful,  
interesting and self-revealing Mon-  
tale, an unusual enthusiasm con-  
tained, an untranslatable, in a  
groove. "Man in the Micro-  
scope", translated here, is a fine  
example. It is a pity too that the  
translations should read at times  
like some of Pound's own linguistic  
hybrids: Singh ignores Montale's  
ironies, overlooks his punctuation,  
makes elementary errors and has  
often cut the originals insensi-  
tively.

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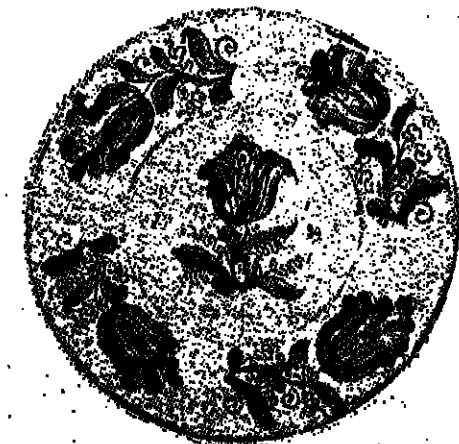
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## Mexico unbuttons

By Jean Franco

CARLOS MONSIVAIS:  
Amor perdido  
349pp, Mexico City: Era.

In his essay on the dehumanization of art, Ortega y Gasset marvelled at the persistent attraction of Romanticism to the popular imagination. Carlos Monsivais's essay on the Mexican popular songwriter, Agustín Lara, included in his new collection of articles, is a witty elaboration of this insight. Lara died in 1970 but his heyday coincided with the golden age of radio (he wrote the golden oldies) and in his life and songs, he carried the romantic myth of the Bohemian to the point of parody—scarred, drug-addicted, his youth dissipated in brothels, more like Werther (the confessed) than Dorian Grey, married to the glamorous María Félix (one of his nine wives), his songs banned for obscenity in the 1930s and, at his death, given a funeral which, as apothecaries, only rivalled that of the uncorrupted poet laureate of Mexico, Amado Nervo, in 1919.

Where does "Literature" end and popular culture begin? As Monsivais shows, Lara's lyrics addressed in "fallen women".

Par qué te hizo el destino pecadora  
si no sabes vender el corazón?

are sometimes undistinguishable from the verse of minor poets of the previous generation. The mood of worldly cynicism of "Aventura", for instance, would not be out of place in the poetry of the decadents of the last century:

Ya que la infamia de tu ruina  
marchita tu admirable destino  
hazme escabroso tu camino  
vende caro tu amor, aventura.

The elegant pose of one age has become the mass culture of another.

Not only Romanticism but the pastoral has been successfully exploited by the culture industry. In Mexico, this is epitomized in the "canción ranchera" which, like the US Western, has as its protagonist a lone horseman whose costume and way of life are stereotyped versions of nineteenth-century dress and manners. The lyric genius of the "canción ranchera" is José Alfredo Jiménez whose songs, with their nostalgia for the place of birth, their macho aggressiveness and the celebration of the bender as the only escape from the tedium of women, generated, as Monsivais shows, the sentimental vocabulary of the oppressed urban immigrant. Jiménez's lyrics, like those of Lara, are splendid examples of the anachronism of the culture industry and the role of highly-paid artisans as technicians in its productions.

This is a topic which has been well observed in the United States but little studied in Latin America despite the rich source material. It is fortunate, however, that Monsivais avoids the dehumanizing attitudes which generally characterize culture criticism. In part, this can be attributed to the fact that his essays range widely over politics and daily life, the media and the personality cult surrounding an artist like Siqueiros. The election of a new president, paralleling the ritualized abdication, the knee-jerk re-election of the "charro" trade-union leader, Fidel Velázquez, the hippy pilgrimage to Avandero in search of the "último high" is paralleled by the pilgrimage of the middle class to a performance of Nureyev in search of the ultimate cultural kick.

Monsivais is less interested in analysing phenomena such as identification, the star system and the personality cult (though he discusses all these in passing) so much as parodying the style, celebrating the absurdity of it all. He is more akin to Tom Wolfe than to Theodore Adorno. And like Tom Wolfe, he has a penchant for the show-stopping one-liner (the American reader is still reeling from his witty "radical" club which makes the reader inclined to sit back and wait for the next zinger).

However, there is more to it than that. For one of the questions that recur in these essays is society's definition of what is decent and respectable, what is permitted and what is to be repressed, as well as the transformation of these standards as a result of modernization. Mexico moved more rapidly than most places (though not as rapidly as contemporary Spain) from the decency standards set by the Daughters of Maria to the strip-tease, from the confessional-box to the idiot box. And Monsivais's snippets of different stages of this transformation are fascinating. The middle class of the Porfiriato Diaz era is captured in the midst of its bric-a-brac—the "statues, curatins, candelabra, Persian carpets, fans with scenes of Versailles, pointed on their tiger-skin rugs, porcelain Arcadus, etc."—but, just as significantly, in its statistics: 368,898 inhabitants in Mexico City, 6,000 licensed bicycles, 10,937 prostitutes whom the police classified as pretty, plain and ugly, and a sale of 500,000 litres of pulque a day.

A widely-read *Manual de Urbanidad y Buena Manera* which is still sold until fairly recently, counselled would-be respectable Mexicans not to toss about in bed, since this makes the bedclothes fall off and obliges us to lie in postures which are contrary to modesty and decorum. The manual permitted its readers to mention feet in polite society but not heads, toes or toenails. Puritanism took on a slightly different form in post-revolutionary society but Steinbeck's film *The Forgotten Village* could still be banned (though briefly) in 1944 because it showed a woman giving birth, and this despite the fact that for over a decade Mexico had also catered to the refugees from North American prohibitions by building casinos, dog-tracks and other dens of vice.

In the 1960s, however, the remnants of the moral cloud-cover were blown away and Mexico finally made it into the sexually free world. The singer Irma Soriano (known as "la tigresa") was thus enabled to stage an elaborate version of Nana which displayed with aggressive vulgarity her cash-conscious sexiness, and was even permitted to boast of her relationship with a president. And now, in the 1970s, there is Isela Vega, who stages plays which allow her to scream all the formerly taboo words with impunity.

What is interesting is the fact that the process of liberation from the antiquated moral code has opened little or no space for political freedoms. If Monsivais is serious about anything it is this. For him, the Tlatelolco massacre in 1968 was the latest symptom of a modernization which would permit long hair but not free trade unions, a dirty word but not clean politics.

## France acculturates

By Peter Burke

R. MUCHEMBLÉ:  
Culture populaire et culture des élites dans la France moderne (XV-XVIII siècles)  
398pp, Paris: Flammarion. 98fr.

Research on the history of popular culture goes on apace and nowhere more than in France. New trees spring up so fast it is harder than ever to see the wood as a whole. Hence Robert Muchembled, a young historian best known for his work on the histories of his native Arols, has undertaken to fit the pieces together into a general interpretation of French popular culture from 1400 to 1800, illustrating it with his own research on the Lille-Arras area.

The book is divided into two parts, focusing in turn on structure and change. One, which concentrates on the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, contains few surprises. Muchembled describes the culture of peasants (emphasizing their animism), and that of townsmen (emphasizing their festive organizations), and suggests that both forms of popular culture were fundamentally defences against the insecurity of the age. He provides a useful synthesis of van Gennep, Halverson, Delumeau, and of more recent writers on the subject.

Part Two, "Repression de la culture populaire", is at once more original and more controversial. At this point the author adopts the Gramsci model of dominant and dominated cultures, suggesting that in the seventeenth century the ruling class tightened their control over popular culture. There was a cultural "dissemination" by the use of absolutist monarchy; the systematic attempt by Church and State to control the beliefs and souls of ordinary people.

"Acculturation" is Muchembled's favourite word for this process. Among the forms he identifies are sexual repression, the rise of carnival punishment, the fight against "superstition" and the reinforcement of the authority of fathers over children. He makes one minor slip here. It was not René de La Rochefoucauld's father who played the tyrant, but his grandfather. The persecution of witches is seen as a crucial part of the "conquest" of popular culture by that of the ruling class. In place of their traditional culture, ordinary people were offered the cheap books of the *Bibliothèque Bleue*, which Muchembled sees as an inferior substitute, an early form of mass culture, and even as the origin of the people's "literature".

This model of the conquest of the

culture by another, which for Muchembled is no mere abstract model, but an interpretation with which he is deeply involved, certainly has explanatory value. It is no doubt a mistake to treat the history of popular culture in isolation from popular history, as is frequently done, to view the *Bibliothèque Bleue* (as Robert Mandrou did in his pioneering study, fourteen years ago) as the simple expression of popular attitudes and values, yet the Muchembled model also has disadvantages. First, it gives the impression which the author may not intend, of a conspiracy theory, which seems implausible. Muchembled does not make a sharp enough distinction between the conscious motives of members of the ruling class, about which he says all too little, and the long-term consequences of their actions.

Secondly, his model encourages us to see the ruling class as monolithic, whereas in fact the leaders of Church and State were not always in agreement. Nicholas Pavillon, bishop of Alot, was a sharp critic of the absolutist state but also a vigorous reformer of popular culture. In the third place, the sharp contrast between a culture which came from the people and a culture which the ruling class imposed on the people makes it difficult to deal with a group central to the history of the period, the professional entertainers, such as minstrels, *hôtels* and *chanteurs-chansonniers*. There is no place in his model or his book for a man like François Cotin, nicknamed *Brûlé-Maison*, a singer who wandered the Arras area in the eighteenth century. Nor does he seem to admit the possibility that the *Bibliothèque Bleue* was the work of individual entrepreneurs, trying to make a profit by giving a wide public what they thought it would like.

In the fourth place, there is the question of witchcraft. Muchembled's views on witchcraft are shortly published at greater length elsewhere, so it would be premature to criticize them in detail here; but there does seem to be a contradiction between his application to Northern France of the Catholic Thomas-Alexandre Macfarlane's interpretation (which sees poor women accused by their neighbours), and his general views about the persecution of witches as a form of acculturation of the dominated by the dominant.

These disadvantages need to be spelled out because Muchembled's interpretation of the history of popular culture is worth taking seriously. Many historians nowadays view the history of popular culture as a mere footnote to the history of the dominant, but taken as a whole, *Culture populaire* is a valuable contribution to the history of the period in these terms.

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## Good hearts and bad deeds

By Peter France

### ABBE PREVOST:

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Volume 1: Mémoires et aventures d'un homme de qualité; Histoire du chevalier des Grieux et de Manon Lescaut  
Edité par Pierre Berthiaume et Jean Sgard.  
480pp, 185fr.

Volume 2: Le Philosophe anglais ou Histoire de Monsieur Cleveland  
Edité par Philip Stevart.  
666pp, 282fr.  
Presses Universitaires de Grenoble.

In the middle of Diderot's *Jacques la fataliste* the author is chatting (once again) with his reader about what a "novelist" might have made of the rather ordinary scene he has just recounted. He imagines a more exciting version, then he rejects it because "it would have stunk to high heaven of Cleveland". We look in the notes and read: "Histoire de Cleveland, fils naturel de Cromwell ou le Philosophe anglais (4 vols in-12, 1732-1733), novel by the Abbé Prévost." But who has read Cleveland now, or for that matter any of the other novels of this prolific writer—with the single exception of *Manon Lescaut*?

As Jean Sgard says, Prévost is "the only great writer of the eighteenth century who has not been republished for a century and a half". The Presses Universitaires de Grenoble are now setting this right, publishing at the rate of two a year eight dense volumes which will contain all of Prévost's own novels—although not of course all the important work of journalism, compilation and translation in which he was involved. The volumes are edited by a team headed by Professor Sgard, the leading Prévost scholar of today, and each one includes a brief account of the history of the text and a list of variants for the most important states of the text, including the *Oeuvres choisies* of 1810-16.

In the eighth volume we are promised copious notes, commentaries and critical essays for the reader who may then have had time to read. The point of this separation of text from commentary is to "leave to the reader the pleasure of discovering Prévost".

So what are the pleasures of this much-forgotten novelist? The first two volumes are both long historical novels. Both take the form of memoirs and are set in the late seventeenth century, at sixty or seventy years' distance from the real point of writing. This was apparently time enough for Prévost to be quite cavalier with the details of history in spite of his genuine interest in writing down facts he has Descartes (d. 1650) exchange letters with Cleveland about 1670 and explains that the vivid passions of Racine's tragedies are due to his love for his wife (Prévost translated Dryden's tragedy). In true historical-novel fashion, Prévost explores the hidden face of the moon, the unwritten secrets of history, the love stories that rocked kingdoms—thus Cleveland is the natural son of a Cromwell who is not only a consummate hypocrite (this was commonplace), but a great womanizer into the bargain.

The *Mémoires et aventures* Prévost's first important novel, is a much more lively performance than Cleveland. Both include plenty of episodes, but in the *Mémoires et aventures* the crisis of the novel is reached quite early on and thereafter Prévost adds book after book to meet public demand, piling adventure on adventure, stopping and starting with no real sense of direction. The tone veers from the tragic to the comic and the comic to the tragic. The tone is much more even than in Cleveland. The *Mémoires et aventures* open happily on a note of the dominant impression in these novels: the world is a dangerous and puzzling place.

So perilous indeed that the temptation of a secret is always present—

Not that one should distinguish too sharply between books which show a remarkable continuity of theme and vision. Both novels, moreover, display those striking qualities which draw readers to *Manon*. Again and again, some dead dialogue, Prévost creates halting scenes, love scenes for the most part, evoked with great physical immediacy. As in *Manon*, tears come readily and a good heart matters more than bad deeds—indeed, death and violence seem to cost these virtuous characters very little at times. There is much to remind one of Rousseau's morality of intention here.

In one respect, however, *Manon* is different from the longer novels, and this is its implied dimension of social criticism, underlined by the choice of a hero and heroine to whom poverty is the great obstacle. The principal action in the *Mémoires et aventures* and in *Cleveland*, both in the main plot and in most of the episodes, are men and women of "quality". They never question the claims of hierarchy, though they may occasionally have financial difficulties. They are captured by corsairs and sold as slaves, they have no need to work, but can give all their time to adventure and feeling. In many respects this is still the world of the immense romances of Mademoiselle de Scudéry—it is surely absurd to believe that the "rise of the novel" was the end of romance; here and ever since, though in differing proportions, the two are inextricably interwoven.

Prévost's big books can certainly be called romances. They tell stories of love and adventure, with exceptional heroes, great passions, splendid deeds, queuing courtiers, strange meetings and recollections, mistaken identities, charms and dreams, and deaths as sudden and perfunctory as those in James Bond films. We are not spared hyperbole, fainting, theatricality, strange meetings and recollections, mistaken identities, charms and dreams, and deaths as sudden and perfunctory as those in James Bond films. We are not spared hyperbole, fainting, theatricality, strange meetings and recollections, mistaken identities, charms and dreams, and deaths as sudden and perfunctory as those in James Bond films.

What then are the recurring images and themes which give (or gave) Cleveland and the *Mémoires et aventures* their power? Above all, the theme of the "fallen woman" here—the fatal, irresistible power of love. Cleveland and his wife Fanny live for love, and Prévost gives us beautiful images of this happy and unhappy passion for which the world is well lost (Prévost translated Dryden's tragedy). Like a moth round a candle, he hovers round taboo images: Cleveland and his young daughter Cécile, the "homme de qualité" and his sister Julie whose corpse he accompanies on its last voyage. Here, as in *Phèdre*, love has a fearful closeness which can only bring death; Cécile, having unknowingly fallen in love with her father, pines away and dies.

This death, like the many disasters of these novels, calls Providence in question. The main characters know themselves to be the victims of fate, pined away among the ruins of love and suffering all the more because they feel more deeply (Werther is on the horizon). Cleveland is also entitled *Le Philosophe anglais* and his hero wrestles throughout with many problems, allowing himself to be wrecked by sudden storms. In the end, in what was a sequel to the original volumes, Prévost gathers him into the fold of a Catholic belief which allows everything to be understood and accepted. But this is not the dominant impression in these novels: the world is a dangerous and puzzling place.

So perilous indeed that the temptation of a secret is always present—

this is what Professor Sgard in his excellent *Prévost romancier* has called Prévost's claustrophobia. The convent and the tomb are strong counter-weights to the lures of the world; after the death of his wife the hero virtually buries himself alive. Even more memorably, the hero and heroine of *Cleveland* grow up and meet underground, in a Devonshire cave, sheltering from the vindictive Cromwell. And in both novels, as the heroes and heroines roam the oceans and continents, occasional havens appear, places where the protagonists are protected, like the Eldorado or the garden of *Candide* (it has often been said, quite rightly, that *Candide* is a foretaste of the utopian colony of Saint Helena). In Book Three of *Cleveland* is broken up by love. Romances are not made of quiet retreat, and the heroes always venture out again into the dangerous, unreliable world, tempted by love, ambition, or simply curiosity.

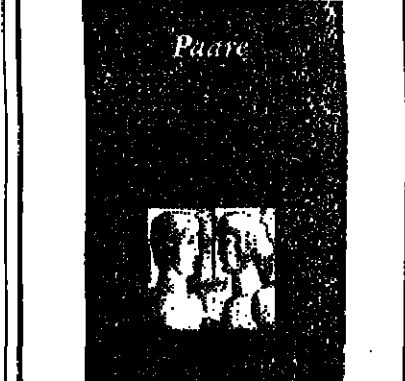
For Prévost was both a monk and an adventurer. He was a contemporary of the roaming and curious Montesquieu, a man of the new age of "unreason". Much of the excitement which is noticeable as a feature of his novels is doubtless to be explained by the need for memorable events or unusual and impressive settings. But there is also a good deal of documentary or philosophical interest, passages such as the very Voltairean description of England in Books Ten and Eleven of the *Mémoires et aventures* (published before the *Lettres philosophiques*). One recalls that Prévost was the general editor of the *Histoire générale des voyages*, that storehouse of travellers' information.

In Cleveland, as in the final pages of *Manon Lescaut*, the great plains and forests of America are put to a use which foreshadows Chateaubriand (who actually went there). In the final volume, when the novel has been nicely settled in France for a long time, Mrs. Riding's story carries the reader back once again to America, for the material cause (and spiritual unrest) of European life with the problems of survival, alone in the wilderness. In places, like so many of his contemporaries, Prévost toys with the superiority of "natural" life, but generally like Voltaire in *L'Ingénu* (yet another work anticipated by Cleveland), he comes down on the side of European enlightenment. His American Indians can at best hope to be seen as nobly and lovingly faithful; they remain inferior to the men and women of quality from France and England. On this, as on such vexed questions as Protestantism or free-thinking, Prévost takes up no clear position. His books are the echoes of a world which he became, so curious, and their loose texture allows all the space in the world for philosophical digressions. In the middle of far-fetched adventures, one meets many of the problems which were to preoccupy thinkers for many years to come.

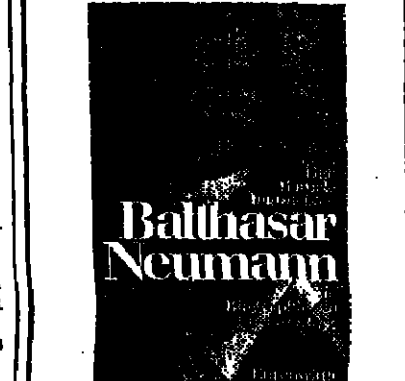
Prévost was nourished on Racine and the classics; he grew up as the *Graban Nights* were appearing in French and he was in his own way one of the first generation of philosophers. Fascinating though he is, it is doubtless too much to hope that this new edition will bring his novels to a wide audience in the twentieth century. Like almost all long novels, they are certainly wearisome at times (and the reader's weariness is increased by the excessively crowded pages of these volumes). In any case, the twentieth century has its own purveyors of myths and images, related to Prévost's no doubt, but more easily accessible to us. If few people actually read *La Nouvelle Héloïse* or *Clarissa* out of choice today, then Cleveland cannot have much chance. *Manon Lescaut* is probably as much as the literate of this will let through. But for students of eighteenth-century France, as for those who are interested in the whole business of telling tall stories, there is much to be learned from these hungry novels, and much pleasure to be had.

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A. A. Cleary  
and many others.

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## The intellectual hardware

By Brian Stock

JACQUES LE GOFF :  
Pour un autre Moyen Age.  
Temps, travail et culture en Occi-  
dent.  
424pp. Paris: Gallimard, 85fr.

Jacques Le Goff has conveniently  
brought under one cover some  
of the best articles written over the  
past quarter-century, which, despite  
a wide range of topics, ably live up  
to the unity of purpose suggested by  
the volume's title. Few contem-  
porary historians are better  
equipped to speak on behalf of the  
"other Middle Ages". Taught by  
Maurice Lombard, influenced by  
Marcel Mauss and, above all, by  
Fernand Braudel, Professor Le  
Goff is an editor of *Annales*,  
distinguished past president of the  
(former) Vth Section and a bril-  
liant teacher whose Paris seminar  
is a well-known crossroads for con-  
temporary scholars ungenites.

The central theme running  
through all these essays is the rela-  
tion of ideas to society. Yet, Le  
Goff's method for dealing with  
this knotty problem have anything  
but stood still over the years. The  
early essays, grouped under the  
rubrics of work, time and human  
values, are contributions to under-  
standing the intellectual conse-  
quences of new class divisions and  
group associations in medieval  
Europe, particularly after the ele-  
venth century. The later studies of  
"culture savante et culture popu-  
laire" deal chiefly with rituals,  
symbols, dreams and folklore; they  
take the study of medieval culture  
in the direction of historical anthro-  
pology.

Two of the best-known early stu-  
dies describe the change "from a  
medieval to a modern social psy-  
chology of time", which Le Goff  
associates with the passage from the  
"temps de l'Église" to the "temps  
du marchand". Against recent  
views, he argued in 1960 that be-  
tween the twelfth and fifteenth  
centuries merchants acquired "a  
culture and mental hardware suffi-  
cient for reflecting on professional  
problems as well as social, moral  
and religious questions". The new  
mentality had serious implications  
for the interpretation of time. If  
time, as church theorists main-  
tained, belonged only to God, then  
in theory at least, the possibility of  
economic progress was ruled out.  
For, whether one considered in-  
terest, credit, profits, units of  
work, or a host of other commer-  
cial activities, time effectively  
ceased to exist. Parallels to this  
conflict existed in the intellectual  
sphere. Was knowledge itself some-  
thing which could be measured,  
taught and sold, or was *scientia*, as  
monastic writers maintained, a  
donum Dei?

Early Christian thinkers renewed  
and amplified ideas about time  
from later antiquity, though they  
concerned themselves chiefly  
with theological issues. From the  
late eleventh century more scien-  
tific notions were introduced  
through Arabic astronomy. The  
older theory was also undermined  
by commercial practices in the  
towns in which a key role was  
played by the merchant. For, as  
soon as market activity became  
organized on any scale, the mea-  
surement of time was inevitable. A  
new set of priorities appeared:  
prices, which rose and fell over  
time, the length of working hours,  
which regulated profits, and  
the precise weights and measures,  
which determined temporal fluc-  
tuations in the value of money. From  
abstract notions like "conscience"  
and "honor", time was "rationalized"  
and "linearized". Yet, if the church's  
conception of time yielded on  
worldly affairs, the merchant  
none the less remained "as the  
other horizon of his existence",  
living one time professionally,  
another religiously. He could at  
once be successful in business and  
yet remain a good Christian, hope-  
ful of salvation. In the end the  
church was compelled to adapt to a  
new, divided moral universe.

Le Goff's studies of work, time  
and religious values are a vote in  
favour of integrating moral issues  
into the wider context of economic  
and social change; but they dis-  
tance themselves intelligently from  
writers who have too narrowly  
focused on individual classes, geo-  
graphical areas, or sectarian move-  
ments. Using somewhat similar  
methods of analysis he brings  
refreshing perspectives to a num-  
ber of central issues in the early  
and later Middle Ages. One of these  
is the relation of the tripartite divi-  
sion of medieval society into those  
who laboured, prayed, or fought,  
to the ideology of monarchy and the  
economic renewal of the period  
between the ninth and the twelfth  
centuries. Another is the legitimiza-  
tion of formerly illicit "profes-  
sional" activities. The new middle  
class, the artisans, doctors, surgeons,  
linemen and even prostitutes—  
were given the status of recognized  
occupational roles as taboos on such  
activities as usury, blood-letting and  
work itself gradually disappeared.  
During the twelfth century com-  
parable problems arose in the  
world of public authority and

student financing in the universi-  
ties. They also affected the medieval  
university's "consciousness of  
itself". At the opposite end of the  
time-scale, Le Goff sees in "the  
silence of the high Middle Ages on  
work and workers" the refusal of  
an entrenched, backward-looking  
rural élite to face changing social  
realities toward the end of the  
Empire.

From the real lives of peasants,  
artisans and merchants it is a short  
step to the analysis of the "popu-  
lar" versus "learned" life of the  
Middle Ages. In a seminal paper on  
Marvinian culture (1967) Le  
Goff argued that the division  
between learned and popular  
traditions in the West goes back  
to the fifth or sixth century  
when, as Dag Norberg put it, the  
Latin language subdivided into  
several forms corresponding to dif-  
ferent social and cultural milieux.  
Two interdependent phenomena  
arising roughly about the same time  
combined to bring about a lasting  
cleavage between "culture élitaire"  
and "traditions folkloriques".  
The emergence of the rural peo-  
ple as a coherent social entity,  
which permanently disrupted the  
class patterns of the later ancient  
world, and the increasing monopol-  
ization of literacy (that is, literacy  
by the clergy, which tended to  
eliminate the vernacular, or to trivialize  
popular practices).

Yet the folklore survived and was  
transformed, as he illustrates in two  
familiar dragon legends. Walter  
Map and Gervase of Tilbury both  
narrate a story in which a nobleman  
finds himself married to a dragon's  
daughter, who turns out to be a  
female serpent in disguise. By  
the end of the twelfth century the

story was well known from Nuremberg  
to Provence. Its metamorphosis, Le  
Goff maintains, was not only due to  
internal, literary factors but also  
to historical developments outside  
the story, such as settlement and  
land clearance. The legend of St  
Marcel provides another example.  
Using Fortunatus's *Vie Marcelline*,  
at his point of departure, Le Goff fol-  
lows Marcel's dragon from the early  
Christian world, where the saint  
overcomes his foe as a "cliv", not a  
religious functionary, to its reappear-  
ance in the sculpture of Notre-Dame  
between 1165 and 1230, where two,  
now quite distinct, traditions—  
"cléricale et folklorique"—meet  
once again.

The forays into "historical anthro-  
pology" cover a wide range. In a  
brilliant essay Le Goff enumerates  
the various forms of magic associ-  
ated with the Indian Ocean trade, and  
finally swept away by the wave of  
exploration in the late fifteenth  
century. His observations will un-  
doubtedly stimulate students of the  
subsequent period of English colo-  
nization of India. Le Goff's essays  
about the subcontinent were diffe-  
rent but no less persistent. In still  
another lengthy essay he investi-  
gates the symbolism of feudal rites  
of initiation. Le Goff never over-  
looks his insights from the social  
sciences and readily presents many  
ideas as hypotheses which may be  
elaborated or questioned. Nor  
beneath the surface of all his work  
one senses a bond of sympathy with  
the common man which recalls  
Michael, to whom he devotes a  
perceptive preface. His writing is  
rich in such work on the  
history of universities fails to take  
any of the sister institution fifty  
miles down the road, let alone uni-  
versities halfway across Europe.  
Part of the difficulty is that uni-  
versity history is so poorly organ-  
ized, the lines of communication  
between working scholars so feeble,  
the access to a wide range of  
relevant materials already pub-  
lished is far from easy.

A second contributing factor must  
lie in the fact that the prevailing

## Crushing the Cathari

By R. L. de Lavigne

MICHEL ROQUEBERT :  
L'Épopée cathare  
Two volumes  
Toulouse: Privat, 260fr the set.

In the last decade there has  
been a proliferation of books in-  
tended for a general audience con-  
cerning the Catharist heresy, which  
spread widely in south-western  
France (Occitania) during the late  
twelfth and early thirteenth cen-  
turies, and the crusade which it  
provoked. Unfortunately this in-  
crease in quantity has scarcely  
been matched by one in quality.  
Many works offer no more than a  
résumé of the already known. On to  
such résumés are all too often  
grafted the anachronistic prejudices  
of their authors.

The most notable exception to  
this depressing state of affairs is  
Michel Roquebert's reconstruction,  
in greater detail than has pre-  
viously been attempted, of the  
events of the Albigensian Crusade.  
He argues that once the "why"  
questions have been dealt with,  
"why" questions will become  
simpler to answer.

Taken too literally, such an  
approach would be simplistic.  
Roquebert, however, sensibly con-  
fronts the crucial methodological  
problems in the introduction to  
each of the two volumes and dis-  
cusses many others as they arise in  
the course of his account. His  
method is particularly successful in  
relating the story with painstaking  
care, and with a liberal use of

primary source material rare in a  
work intended chiefly for the gen-  
eral public, he manages to avoid  
rebarbative partisanship.

True, Roquebert does not care  
much for Simon de Montfort, mili-  
tary leader of the crusade from  
early on, nor for the papal legates,  
especially Arnaut-Amaury. These  
men interpreted Innocent III's  
orders in such a way as to turn a  
crusade into a personal conquest.  
Indeed, they were eventually to  
fall over the division of the  
spoils. This dislike does not, how-  
ever, prevent the author from pre-  
serving clearly their point of view  
nor from understanding their prob-  
lems. If they exceeded their brief,  
it was because they comprehended  
better than Pope Innocent III the  
depth of heresy in the region.  
They saw that it could never be  
extirpated successfully unless the  
family of St Gilles was ousted  
from its position at the head of  
the County of Toulouse. They  
were thus minded in trying to  
achieve this and despite papal  
indecision.

As for Montfort and the legates,  
the views and problems of each of  
the major protagonists are given  
careful consideration. Innocent III  
is well served, despite his aim  
of crushing heresy, by the legates  
for all. Peter II, the Catholic  
king of Aragon, was drawn inexorably  
and disastrously into the con-  
flict on the side of the *favorables* of  
heresy; Montfort represented too  
great a threat to his pretensions  
as the arm of Philip II of France  
was a distant but menacing char-  
acter, over-conscious of the threat  
the crusade posed to his rights.  
Indeed, it is argued that he delayed  
the launching of the crusade by  
seven years. Raymond VI of Toulouse  
emerges as an undistinguished leader  
who, lacking the martial arts, hoped  
vainly that diplomatic manoeuvres  
would resolve the impossible situa-  
tion in which the crusade placed  
him. He was incapable of placating  
him. His son was to do, from the  
nascent Occitanian "nationalism"  
provoked by the crusade. Overall,  
the crusade is seen as causing a  
conflict between canon and feudal  
law. Discussions between the two  
sides are described as a "dialogue  
between the dead".

Naturally, not all of Roquebert's  
interpretations will meet with  
unanimous approval. He is scarcely  
convincing, for example, when he  
argues that after the Fourth Later-  
an Council Innocent III "officially"  
embraced the "young Raymond"  
VII to "reconquer his inheritance"  
from Montfort. Nevertheless, the  
majority of problems are handled  
well, and the work is a

This work is also greatly to be  
recommended to those not over-  
concerned with the more difficult  
problems which preoccupy his-  
torians. By taking adequate space  
to let the story unfold, Ro-  
quebert has produced an  
eminently readable account. The  
protagonists cease to appear as car-  
bon cutouts. This is as true of  
the minor as of the major partici-  
pants. He scrupulously presents a  
survey of the heretical movement  
have frequented each of the places  
invested by the crusaders. One thus  
acquires an acute sense of the in-  
terconnected noble families and  
their clients who appear to have  
been the mainstay of the heresy in  
its *terres d'éllection*, the Lauragais,  
Garonne, Comminges, Razès, Tre-  
vins and Minervois. No one since  
Jean Guiraud has achieved this  
degree of immediacy, even if, like  
his predecessor, Roquebert suffers  
in serious danger of overstatement  
the degree to which the local nob-  
ility was affected. Nor does he  
attempt to explain why Catharism  
was so attractive to noble circles in  
this particular region.

It is, however, in his account of  
the diplomatic and military events  
the latter were illustrated by  
Roquebert's photographs, that Ro-  
quebert is triumphant. Here is no boring  
because over-condensed, relation-  
battles and apparently meaningless  
diplomatic manoeuvres but a plain  
telling and moving story. This is  
especially true of the second  
volume, which covers no more than  
the years 1213-16. The exposure of  
the battle of Muret (1213),  
which saw the defeat and death of  
Peter II, is iconically the hero only  
of the year previously of the defeat of  
Muslims at Las Navas de Tolosa, and  
the odds for Montfort appeared all  
the way for his final invasion and take-  
over of the territories and the Count  
Raymond VI. It is with the con-  
firmation of the County of Tou-  
louse and with the beginnings of  
lapse and with the beginnings of  
renewed opposition to his rule that  
the second volume ends.

No doubt Roquebert's narra-  
tive has its limitations. A very  
deep understanding of the area  
appeal of heresy in the region  
only be achieved by Coubert or Bonheur,  
has found its essential structure  
to lay bare the essential structure  
of a society which, despite the  
study of Catharist studies, remains  
incompletely the publication of the  
third volume, which should be  
Roquebert's special opus to the  
monarchy's assertion of control  
over the County of Toulouse in  
1229.

Ruth Padel

## Educating the Florentines

By C. B. Schmitt

AMANDO F. VERDE :  
Lo studio fiorentino 1473-1503  
Ricerche e documenti  
Volume 3  
123pp. Pisa: Prossio "Memorie  
Domestiche", L50,000.

Universities and their history have  
been a subject of interest for at  
least 400 years, and Riccoboni's  
work on Padua from the six-  
teenth century, and Wood's on  
Oxford from the seventeenth, are  
all useful today. Much of the  
earlier work—and indeed many  
added up to the present day—was  
devoted to illustrating the impor-  
tance of a single university. In fact  
most books on universities have  
been written out of extremely  
partial motives and, even today,  
many of these histories—with  
varying degrees of objectivity and  
scholarly precision—are still being  
written. Works of a comparative  
nature, at least for the post-med-  
ieval period, are rare, but two such  
works, those of Rashid Rida and  
John H. Elliott, have been published  
in the last few years. Rashid Rida  
has over forty years old, must  
rank as the best guides to an  
extensive and complex subject.  
Though in many ways the time  
has not yet come for a comparative  
study of the history of univer-  
sities, the study of the history of  
universities is so poorly organ-  
ized, the lines of communication  
between working scholars so feeble,  
the access to a wide range of  
relevant materials already pub-  
lished is far from easy.

A second contributing factor must  
lie in the fact that the prevailing

view of intellectual and cultural  
history emphasized the Renaissance  
as an era of art, ceremony and  
control of the time and certainly  
not on the universities, where  
and tedious medieval *quadrant*  
were seen to have wasted the young  
minds of generation after genera-  
tion. With dry academic dispassion  
in Latin when the glories of Medi-  
court processions and the way astro-  
logers decorated their palaces and  
put symbolic images on the walls  
of churches were there to provide  
scholars on the make with a career  
of excitement and reward?

In recent years, however, there  
has been a certain change in  
scholarly fashion. Increasingly a  
new energy has been focused on  
university history, much of it  
centred on the Renaissance period.  
This is partially attributable to a  
new-found interest in social history,  
since the student class provides a  
useful group of poets with which to  
work, sometimes offering a type of  
documentation not easily found  
elsewhere. The work of Lawrence  
Stone and his followers, the pro-  
ponents of the "social history of  
Oxford" and the "social history of  
the University of Padua", have  
recently shown the revived inter-  
est in the subject. Perhaps the  
best indication of the sub-  
ject's coming of age is to be  
found in the new *Journal of  
International History of the  
Universities* (1973). What is still  
lacking, however, is a society and a  
journal devoted specifically to the  
subject, though *History of Educa-  
tion* (founded in 1972) now fills  
part of the gap, at least for the  
English-speaking world, even if its  
focus is too Anglocentric for  
comfort.

It is also increasingly evident that  
the role of university culture during  
the late medieval and early modern  
period was more important than  
previously thought. Recent work  
in the history of science shows that  
universities were not always  
backward as is usually thought or,  
if they were, that a Galileo could  
share in these deficiencies. Charles  
Lohr's work is showing not only how  
perceptive university culture was  
(and extraneous university culture  
was even during the high Renaissance,  
but also how many of the key  
figures of Renaissance culture in  
one way or another wrote on the  
university. Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*,  
Aristotle's *Metaphysics* on natural  
history, and various studies on mili-  
tary engineering, were all checked by  
Jow in late sixteenth-century uni-  
versities. Only at one's peril can one  
now try to interpret the intellectual  
history of the Renaissance without  
paying due attention to what was  
happening in the universities.

Florence, of course, was the very  
epitome of the Renaissance, and  
the popular textbook view of that  
city is still based on a rather  
idealistic picture in which the  
Platonic Academy inspired a period  
of brilliant creativity as secular  
as it was anti-medieval. For the  
interior of the Florentine doors  
were decorated and what colours  
and images adorned the walls of  
her churches, surprisingly little  
interest has been shown in the uni-  
versity. Since Gherardo's monu-  
mental work of 1961 only a handful  
of articles have shed new light on  
the subject.

Founded in 1349, the studio of  
Florence remained in the "human-  
istic" until 1473, at which time  
the bulk of the institution was  
moved to Pisa to be fused with the  
more flourishing studio *plasma*.  
What remained in Florence was  
only the *facoltà di poetica* and  
rhetoric, comprising only a couple  
of chairs in humanistic subjects.  
The remainder was packed off to  
Pisa and it was only in the nine-  
teenth century that a university in  
the full sense was once again re-  
founded in Florence. Thus, the  
very history of its cultural domi-  
nation in Europe, Florence seemed to  
move its university outside the city,  
a couple of days' journey away.

What effect this may have had on  
its intellectual development can only  
be guessed at, but it is true that  
many Florentines—including Gio-  
vanni de' Medici (later Pope Leo X)  
and Galileo Galilei—did their ad-  
vanced study at Pisa, roughly the  
same distance from Florence as Ox-  
ford or Cambridge were from London.  
Nor could the fourteen-year-old  
Cardinal Giovanni have been the  
only homesick Florentine *con-*  
*punita* to complain that in Pisa  
"è come essere in yola perduta".  
He survived there, nevertheless,  
even without the conventional dis-  
cussion of more modern times, to  
crown his studies in 1492 by a  
public disputation followed by "un  
suntuoso ricevimento".

The cultural penalty paid by  
Florence for translating the studio  
cannot have been too great, allowing  
for periods of disruption in the early  
sixteenth century when Pisan-  
Florentine relations were not always  
too cordial. Still, during the Ducal  
period (1539-1569) the studio was  
flourished, and the road was thus  
Arno was well worn by young  
scholars making their way to the  
city of S. Raineri in quest of quali-  
fications in law or medicine.

The attempt to shed new light on  
the Florentine-Pisan studio has been  
undertaken with vigour by Ar-  
mando F. Verde. The first two  
volumes of his work appeared in  
1973 and now, just four years later,  
we have two more massive tomes,  
based upon almost exhaustive archi-  
val and manuscript research con-  
trolled by the judicious use of  
printed sources. In light of what  
has already been said, it should be  
noted that the title of the work is  
misleading, since it deals more with  
Pisa than with Florence. Be this as  
it may, the work is of impressive  
proportions and is the sort of re-  
search upon which future studies of  
the Italian Renaissance ought to be  
based. It shows unequivocally that  
extensive projects can still be  
carried through by hard-working,  
well-organized individuals, while co-  
operative ventures can take years  
to complete.

The first two volumes of Ar-  
mando F. Verde's work deal with the  
officials and teachers of the university,  
providing a general bibliog-  
raphical orientation. The volumes  
we are here considering tell us what  
can be learnt about the students.  
The uncoloured records of the  
period are lost and this lack can be  
alleviated only in part by recourse  
to notarial and other types of archi-  
val documents, to contemporary  
correspondence, and to other  
extant materials.

By painstakingly sifting all of this  
material Fr Verde has come up with  
a surprising amount of information.  
He has been able to identify some  
1,600 students during the thirty-year  
period in question. Less than a half  
were Florentines and about 15 per  
cent came from outside Italy; mostly  
from the Iberian Peninsula and  
France; but there were a handful of  
Englishmen, among them Grocy  
and Linacre, who studied with the  
great Polidoro. Other famous names  
include Amerigo Vesputius, Alessan-  
dro Ferraro (later Pope Pius VII),  
Cesare Borgia, Francesco Guicci-  
ardini, Jacopo Nardi, Giovanni Nesli,  
and Filippo di Filippo Strozzi; to  
mention only a few. Inserted into  
the vast documentation which Fr  
Verde gives are whole groups of  
documents, including many letters,  
but also inventories of libraries,  
which tell us much about the edu-  
cational situation in Quattrocento  
Florence.

This broad scope of interpreta-  
tion also makes it possible to include  
text which do not touch the  
studio *fiorentino* directly, but  
which are integral to an understand-  
ing of schools and education in the  
city as a whole. For example, he  
includes information on Alessandra  
Bello, daughter of Chancellor  
Bartolomeo, who, being a woman,  
could not be admitted to the uni-  
versity, but who nevertheless pur-  
sued higher studies with the aid of  
several professors engaged to give  
her private instruction.

The most significant extra-  
university part of Fr Verde's work  
and, indeed, in some ways the most  
fascinating section in all his work,  
pages of documentation, is the sup-  
plementary section entitled "fan-  
tasia di scuola in 1480". By sifting  
the *carteggio* (fax-records) for the  
year of 1480 he has been able  
to determine that during that  
year some 1,635 Florentine children  
were enrolled in the three different  
sorts of schools giving primary

education.

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During 1978, the bicentennial year of the deaths of Voltaire and Rousseau,  
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THE COMPLETE WORKS OF VOLTAIRE  
Edited by W. H. Barber and an international committee. The edition will  
comprise 135 volumes, plus indexes, and completion is expected in the  
early 1980s. Of the literary works (volumes 1-84), eight volumes have  
already been published, and the *Correspondence and related documents* (volumes 85-  
135) will be completed in 1977. The reduced prices shown are those offered  
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## On the big dipper

By Robin Buss

DANIEL BOULANGER:  
Dilemme d'Ici  
169pp. 30fr.  
L'Enfant de bohème  
304pp. 45fr.  
Paris: Gallimard.

Daniel Boulanger is also a novelist, poet and, according to the jacket of *L'Enfant de bohème*, the author of more than sixty film scripts. "also" because the form that he has made peculiarly his own is the short story, illustrating its potentialities in tales and sketches that range in length from a couple

of pages to between twenty and thirty. Within this span he examines the facets of a universe which is no less disquieting for being at times capricious and whimsical.

The characters and situations in the eleven stories which make up *L'Enfant de bohème* are at once recognizable to readers of Boulanger's other stories and, for that matter, of his novels: *Alma d'Ici*, first published in 1959 and recently re-issued, casts essentially the same reflection of men and women who have reached a point in life where they are appropriated by their eccentricities and initiate or suffer violence and disasters without these events denting their shells.

Elise, in "Le Portrait", the passive victim of rape, somehow manages to be equally somnolent while undoing its effects with a pair of scissors, and ends up where she

was going in the first place, on one of those paths "que l'on reprend quelquefois, en songe, malgré soi, et qui traversent la vie morte". Achille Nègre, the profoundly amoral sacrificer of "Une ombre dans le paysage", progresses from theft to murder not only without compunction but without a tremor disturbing the surface of his existence. He is, none the less, an idealist who at least realizes his vision of a perfect seaside landscape by removing the blot which disfigured it.

The fairground, with its grotesques and its underlying violence, is the setting for two or three of these stories and an important element in Boulanger's world.

Achille's wife (and eventual victim) degenerates into a sideshow: alcoholic, addicted to pop music played on a radio of full volume and never properly tuned, she attracts her husband and her lovers only because of her wooden leg. The humour in many of the stories is also fairground humour, exploiting the incongruous and freakish, with an element of hysteria as, reaching the top of Boulanger's big dipper, we are left staring into the void.

Three stories at least make the collection worth getting. "Ce qu'en pense Gontbert" neatly stunts its two central characters, then succeeds in trapping them in their prison at the very moment when they, and we, think they have escaped. "Un avatar" develops the different meanings of its title through a Christ-figure who is both an incarnation of a deity and a misfortune to those he apparently tries to help. Finally, "Béatrice"—another example of the cure with which Boulanger chooses his titles—angustiously locks together the destinies of two musicians in a story which is also a reflection on art and perhaps betrays a short-story writer's misgivings about a talent which operates within certain constraints and is necessarily refined rather than energetic. The form Boulanger has chosen certainly requires artifice but, as he shows, it imposes no boundaries on the imagination.

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## Charmingly unpleasant

By Barbara Wright

MICHEL TOURNIER:  
Le Cœur de bruyère  
307pp. Paris: Gallimard. 49fr.

I find some of these short stories disturbing, just as I found Michel Tournier's magnificent novel *The Erl-King* disturbing, and for the same reasons. In *The Erl-King*, M. Tournier's understanding of the spirit of the Teutonic powers of evil underlying the actions and philosophy of the Nazis was complete. That almost seemed legitimate to assume that he felt some obscure complicity with them. Some of the stories in *Le Cœur de bruyère* (the bird of the title is a kind of grouse), are orientated towards the same dark, satiric forces—and again, with charm and persuasiveness.

"La jeune fille et la mort" is one of the longer stories. Death has always acted as a magnet for Mélanie, ever since she was a "docile, intelligent, hard-working" little schoolgirl. Death, and also sadism and torture, for Mélanie was born bored—bored by everything in life. The way M. Tournier treats with such calm, and apparent approval, his protagonist's quest of all life being boring may perhaps disturb others, too. After Mélanie has been cheated of a lovely world-wide holocaust when America and Russia just missed blowing us all up at the time of the Cuba crisis, and after she has subsequently failed to finish herself off with a dose of poison (all this time she was a teacher in an infants' school, and one can't help wondering what she was teaching those infants), she finally makes it. Mélanie dies, still young and pretty—of laughter. The author introduces a young doctor to describe this accidental event in lengthy scientific language, and goes on to talk about "la joie de ne pas vivre".

Children play a large part in these stories, some of which were actually written for them. "Amandine ou les deux jardins", a symbolic tale of a little girl on the threshold of adult life. There are also free fantasies on fairy stories and myths: Tom Thumb trying to run away from his narrow bourgeois home is good, and the novel's new version of the story of Adam and Eve is better still, and full of light-hearted humour. In the beginning was just Adam, as we all know. But Adam is a hermaphrodite and he complains to Jehovah that this means that there are two beings in him, the one sedentary, the other nomadic, and really, he can't do all the work in the world. Right, says Jehovah, I'll cut you in two—go to sleep. When Adam wakes up there is another man lying by his side: "Et il appelle cet autre homme: 'femine'".

M. Tournier is also sympathetic to people who have less grimy obsessions than Mélanie's death wish. But the avant-garde photographer Veronique, who experiments with chemicals directly on her lover's skin and, when he is dead, exhibits it (his skin) as her *dévoeure*. The monologue. The Felshitski, about a bank clerk who only interests in life is women's underclothes, is loquacious, imaginative, and not a bit grim—except in the consequences for the hero, whose passion lands him in a mental hospital.

M. Tournier has a wide range of subjects, and of course he writes extremely well—but he still frightens me.

La mer n'est pas comme un chose, ni comme une montagne. C'est une personne vivante, qui aime, qui me parle et à qui je parle. Elle a des sentiments, des passions, elle sait rire et se mettre en colère. Quelquefois elle me maime pas. Elle m'aime pas moi qui suis loin d'elle, qui elle qui est loin de moi, elle m'aime, la plus grande personne, la plus forte, la plus belle. Tout le temps après de moi elle bouge, elle influence ma vie. Je me souviens d'elle.

Here, mock naively, has become real naivety. *Monde* too hovers uneasily between being, on one level, a kind of handbook for kids' life, permeated by a "sweet" tone that the right-minded writers generally avoid; and on another, an often mystical appeal to everyone to commune with nature.

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COLLIER-MACMILLAN

## Time out of Time

By Virgil Nemoianu

URCEA ELIADE:  
The Forbidden Forest  
Translated by M. Ricketts and Mary Park Stevenson  
30pp. University of Notre Dame Press. £13.50.

Urcea Eliaade's prodigious output as a writer on mythology and religious philosophy should not obscure the fact that he has also written a substantial body of prose fiction. This was written in Roumania, but has been widely translated into a number of European languages. Even before 1930 his first fictional novel met with an enthusiastic response in Roumania. The dozen or so novels (or long short stories) he wrote in the 1930s can be added roughly into two kinds. First, there are number of contemporary narratives dealing with selected young intellectuals, who André Gide-like "immoralism" soon turns into a desire to deny reason, tradition and civic responsibility in favour of a nihilistic nihilism and gratuitous violence. The second are frankly "Gothic" tales in which the supernatural bursts into a world of perplexed everyday existence: a serpent named human wrecks havoc among a group of people slyly preparing for a conventional marriage; a beautiful female vampire slowly drains a traditional household; a student of Hindu lore is transported to another temporal dimension. Needless to say, Eliaade's sensational plots are loaded down by layer upon layer of symbolism.

The best of Eliaade's fictional work is the handful of short stories which he wrote after 1940 and which are mostly concerned with the struggles of characters caught in magical dislocations of time who reserve their identity and sanity. Eliaade himself, however, in this kind of translation tells us that *The Forbidden Forest* is his best work. It is certainly his most ambitious, mixing as it does the vitalistic, documentary and fantastic strands of his pre-war fiction in a huge panorama of Roumanian history and intellectual development over twelve years, from before World War II until the communist takeover.

The main character, Stefan Viziru, a government economist, is an innocent and puzzled spectator of the breakdown of the Courgenou order and the rise of fascism in Roumania, of the bombing of London and the deaths of spy networks in Lisbon, of the war against Soviet Russia, of the change of regimes in Bucharest, and of the futile fury among émigré groups in post-war Paris. Viziru is remote not only from his own family and friends, but even from his own country. He seeks to capture, or to recapture, a secret experience of "totality" which is never equally of an absolute love or a revelation of the sacred in the profane.

Ultimately, this amounts to a stepping outside Time, which the individual has to attempt, not only for the sake of his personal redemption, but also as a matter of national concern: Roumanians can survive only by boycotting History as it were, by evading its crushing hostility to them through some decisive ontological withdrawal. This recommendation has to be seen as part of a heated debate which has gone on both outside and inside Roumania as to the choices that are available. Eliaade's novel (first published in 1955 in French, and only later, in 1971, in Roumanian, by a small émigré publishing house) is an answer to E. M. Cioran's deep pessimism to leave a mark in history. In the late 1950s Constantin Noica argued that the country's intellectuals were merely suffering the consequences of having chosen the *esprit de finesse* in a world that was marching (East and West alike) with the *esprit de géométrie*.

Eliaade argues his case by showing

## The oil nexus

By John W. Butt

CARLOS FUENTES:  
La Cabeza de la hidra  
286pp. Barcelona: Argos.

*La Cabeza de la hidra* is a disarmingly straightforward novel, which may surprise those readers who have survived *Terra nostra*, Carlos Fuentes' previous offering. That colossal extravaganza reflected such contempt for the constraints of realism, that one wondered if the author would ever come back down to earth. One character turned into a but, another had three identical bodies, Philip II was the same age as his grandmother, and the New World was discovered almost a century late.

*La Cabeza de la hidra* reassures us that Fuentes' grip on reality is still pretty firm despite a few understandable tremors as fantasy tries to force its way back. It is a spy-thriller of all unlikely things, a genre apparently so unpromising for a writer like this that he must have taken it up as a self-discipline after the licences of the previous novel. All the standard features are there, including the dumb women, secret codes, laser beams, bodies in freezers and even false beards. The issue is red-hot, the implications for the Arab-Israeli dispute of Mexico's huge untapped oil reserves. The hero, Felix Maldonado, is—as his boss remarks—a sort of James Bond of the development world, full of courage but constantly brought down by his incoherence and friends. He seeks to capture, or to recapture, a secret experience of "totality" which is never equally of an absolute love or a revelation of the sacred in the profane.

His shadowy

characters lured by a concern with history lose their bearings: the petty blackmailer Vladimir with his delusions of persecution and revenge; Bursuc, the philandering evangelist turned police-informer; even such pathetic and endearing characters as the opportunist actor Bibescu, desperately endeavouring to write a dramatic transfiguration of his nation's tragic experiences; or the scholar Tancu Anin with his quaint collector's obsessions. By contrast, Viziru finds salvation in his apocalyptic death together with Ileana, the woman who represents his ideal love; his friend Boris, similarly, withdraws to a higher (mythical) plane of existence while slowly dying under police torture in 1948.

The English translation is flat but accurate, its occasional errors being caused by an excessive zeal for the literal. It could help to fill a double gap: to explain both the Roumanian roots of Eliaade's universalist constructions and also the metaphysical and moral dilemmas which lend Roumanian intellectual life its baffling, melancholy tones.

opponents—cultivated Goldfinger figures—display a cool, omniscient ruthlessness which ties poor Felix in knots. Perhaps the worst of patriotic Mexico, constantly outwitted by the know-how of the big powers and doomed to be the victim of his own riotous Latin passions, Felix thus becomes a rather touching anti-hero, mediocre civil servant projected into a world of sex, violence and heroics which is almost certainly the creation of his fantasies.

It all seems very predictable, despite the irony which should—but doesn't quite—remind us that Fuentes is above all this. Even the language of the novel is disconcerting after the bewitched prose of *Terra nostra*. No one can doubt that Fuentes can write: he has so worked and kneaded his medium that in the previous novel there were positively sticky patches. But this novel makes us feel that the language of the novel is disconcerting after the bewitched prose of *Terra nostra*. No one can doubt that Fuentes can write: he has so worked and kneaded his medium that in the previous novel there were positively sticky patches. But this novel makes us feel that the language of the novel is disconcerting after the bewitched prose of *Terra nostra*. No one can doubt that Fuentes can write: he has so worked and kneaded his medium that in the previous novel there were positively sticky patches. 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## CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS

## Dorset

County Education Department

Bournemouth and Poole

College of Art

Royal London House, Lansdale, Bournemouth

Tel: 20772

## College Librarian

Salary APS £4,773 by increments to £5,073 (inclusive of supplement).  
Must be a Chartered Librarian. A degree relevant to the work of a College of Art would be an advantage.

Application forms returnable by 27th October, 1978, and further details from Senior Administrative Officer, Bournemouth and Poole College of Art, Royal London House, Lansdale, Bournemouth. (Tel: Bournemouth 20772).

COUNTY LIBRARY SERVICE

## Librarian

## Second in Charge

WINTON GROUP (EAST AREA)

POST LB 86

Must be Chartered Librarians preferably with public library experience.

Salary Librarian's Scale above bar £3,732 (minimum) by increments to £4,146 (inclusive of supplement).

Application forms and further details from The County Librarian, Colinton Park, Dorchester DT1 1XJ. (Please quote post number.)

PUBLIC RECORD  
OFFICE,  
Kew  
Assistant Keepers

The Public Record Office exists to maintain and extend the collections of public records, dating from the 11th century to the present day, which are held in its repositories at Kew, Surrey, and Chancery Lane, London, and to facilitate their use for research by the public.

Assistant Keepers provide expertise and direction in most aspects of the Office's work. Further information on their work can be obtained from the Public Record Office on 01-878 3444 ext. 414. Candidates should normally have a degree with 1st or 2nd class honours, or equivalent qualification, and a good knowledge of at least two foreign European languages or one such language and Latin.

SALARY: as AK First Class £5,665-£8,630 or AK Second Class £5,385-£8,118. Level of appointment and starting salary according to age, qualification, and experience. Promotion prospects. Non-contributory pension scheme.

For full details and an application form (to be returned by 3 November 1978) write to Civil Service Commission, Alencon Link, Basingstoke, Hants, RG21 1JB, or telephone Basingstoke (0256) 68551 (answering service operates outside office hours). Please quote G (38) 382.

## Llyfrgell Genedlaethol Cymru

THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF WALES

Llyfrgell Genedlaethol Cymru

Appointments of

LIBRARIAN

The present Librarian, who is the Chief Executive Officer of the National Library of Wales, is due to retire in May 1979, and the Council must have applications for the post by the end of October 1978. The successful candidate will be responsible for the day-to-day running of the library and for the development of its services. The successful candidate will be responsible for the day-to-day running of the library and for the development of its services. The successful candidate will be responsible for the day-to-day running of the library and for the development of its services.

Ministry of Defence (Army Department)

HISTORICAL  
NARRATOR

... to be responsible, with some assistance, for the collection, collation and indexing of information of historical significance for the Army Historical Branch in London. The successful candidate will also prepare narratives of military operations, including administration and logistics, based on original research.

Candidates, normally aged at least 25, must have an interest in modern history and preferably research experience. Some knowledge of the organisation of the armed forces and staff procedures is required. Ability to write clear, concise English essential. Former Army service advantageous, and a relevant degree in history, together with experience in the organisation of information, desirable.

Starting salary will be £5,340, rising to £6,860. Non-contributory pension scheme.

For full details and an application form (to be returned by 2 November 1978) write to Civil Service Commission, Alencon Link, Basingstoke, Hants, RG21 1JB, or telephone Basingstoke (0256) 68551 (answering service operates outside office hours). Please quote G/9945.

Essex County Library

North &amp; West Division Loughton Area Team

Children &amp; Schools

Assistant  
Librarian AP3 or 4

£3,490 to £4,320 per annum plus £312 annual salary supplement plus £180 per annum London Weighting. We require a qualified Librarian to be based at the Loughton Central Library, Traps Hill, Loughton, responsible for Children and Schools.

Further information regarding this post and reorganization generally can be obtained by telephoning the Administration Office on Chelmsford 84881, ext. 35. Applications (no forms) by October 30, 1978 (quoting ref. no. 74778), to Mr. Barry Langton, County Librarian, Goldley Gardens, Chelmsford, Essex CM2 0EW.



Essex County Council

Education Services  
Library Service

## Librarian

## Dispersed Services

£61,802 (£4,920 to £9,748, plus £312 supplement)

This post is based at Carcroft Circulation H.Q. (sited six miles from the centre of Doncaster), which acts as the administrative headquarters for 30 branches, 2 mobile, hospitals and schools services.

The main function of the post is the management and development of support services provided by the Headquarters, including supervision of the mobile library service. Applicants should be Chartered Librarians with extensive experience in general librarianship and proven managerial and administrative ability. Candidates must be able to drive, and a casual user's car allowance is payable. Assistance with housing and removal expenses in appropriate cases.

Application forms and further details available from the Chief Executive (Personnel Section), Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council, Priory Place, Doncaster DN1 1BN. Closing date 27th October, 1978.

Royal County of  
BERKSHIRE

## ASSISTANT LIBRARIAN

£3,465-£4,146

A vacancy exists in the Central Berkshire Division, Reading, for an Assistant Librarian. The post is currently based at the Southcote Library and requires active participation in the professional work of a group of four branch libraries (two full-time urban, two part-time rural). The successful candidate, who will be appointed on Librarian's Scale, may subsequently be transferred to work elsewhere in the eleven branch libraries serving a population in excess of 230,000.

For a job description, further information and an application form please contact the Divisional Librarian, Central Berkshire, Central Library, Blagrove Street, Reading RG1 1QL (Telephone: 35511, ext. 2940) to whom applications should be returned within two weeks of the closing date.

CENTRAL REGISTRY

Administrative Officer  
(Section Leader)

Salary £4,680-£5,067 inclusive

The central registry contains a comprehensive filing system, small technical library and plan filing system, staffed by the Administrative Officer and two assistants. Duties include accurate allocation of documents, extraction of Council minutes and committees and an essential element is the continuous review of the system. You should have relevant experience in a Registry, plus the ability to work under pressure in a responsible position. A qualification is not essential although desirable.

Pleasant air-conditioned offices, staff restaurant, flexible working hours.

Application forms from Assistant Director (Personnel), London Borough of HammerSmith, HamnerSmith House (BOC Building), Black's Road, London W8 9EG, quoting reference ESA.95. Closing date: 27th October, 1978.

## Hammersmith

MERTHYR TYDFIL BOROUGH COUNCIL

LEISURE SERVICES DEPARTMENT

## ARTS OFFICER

SALARY PO 1 (£5,727-£8,342)

Administrative and Managerial position at a senior level in the Leisure Services Department. The successful applicant will be responsible to the Chief Leisure Services Officer for:

- (1) The Library Service,
- (2) Museum,
- (3) Tourism,
- (4) Conservation,
- (5) The performing and Visual Arts.

Duties (3) to (5) are additional and the grading of the post will be reviewed as the services develop. It is also the intention of Council to appoint a Deputy Chief Leisure Services Officer in the Spring of 1979 from one of the four Section Heads in the Department. Casual car user allowance is payable. Temporary housing allowance will be provided if required. Removal expenses and lodging allowance payable in appropriate cases. The appointment will be subject to the National Scheme of Conditions of Service, the Local Government Superannuation Act and a satisfactory medical report.

Application forms obtainable from Personnel Section (Telephone No. Merthyr Tydfil 3221, Ext. 418) must be returned to me by 12 noon on Thursday 19 October 1978.

BELWYN JONES  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE & TOWN CLERK  
Town Hall, Merthyr Tydfil CF47 8AL.

## LIBRARIAN

Imperial Tobacco Limited, the UK's largest cigarette manufacturer has a vacancy for a Chartered Librarian in its Research Department in Bristol.

The person appointed will have full responsibility for the supervision and daily activities of the Library which provides a lending and information service to the Company's scientific staff.

An essential part of the Librarian's work is the provision of regular technical reviews of research and other topics as well as the maintenance of a fortnightly computer-linked bibliography. Consequently, applicants should ideally be science or engineering graduates who have specialised in librarianship since their chosen career and who have acquired several years' experience in this field.

The Company offers a salary within the range £4,120-£5,088 p.a. and operates pension and sickness benefit schemes. Other benefits include flexible working hours and assistance with relocation expenses where appropriate.

Please write for application form to: J. Powell, Research Department, Imperial Tobacco Limited, Raleigh Road, Bristol BS3 1QX.

IMPERIAL TOBACCO  
RESEARCH

LIBRARIANS

KINGS COLLEGE

ROSEMARY APOCALYPSE

SCHOOL

University of London

DEPARTMENT OF LIBRARIANSHIP

The University of London

The University of London

The University of London

The University of London

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LIBRARIANS

NOTTINGHAM POLYTECHNIC

LIBRARY

POLYMER DIVISION

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